

# THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION FOR OUR NATION'S CHILDREN

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION AND LABOR  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

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HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, JULY 24, 2008

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# C O N T E N T S

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	Page
Hearing held on July 24, 2008 .....	1
Statement of Members:	
Altmire, Hon. Jason, a Representative in Congress from the State of Pennsylvania:	
Prepared statement of .....	62
Questions submitted to witnesses and their responses .....	66
Keller, Hon. Ric, a Representative in Congress from the State of Florida ..	11
Prepared statement of .....	13
Kind, Hon. Ron, a Representative in Congress from the State of Wisconsin	
Prepared statement of .....	15
Kucinich, Hon. Dennis J., a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio, prepared statement of .....	17
Kucinich, Hon. Dennis J., a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio, prepared statement of .....	62
McMorris Rodgers, Hon. Cathy, a Representative in Congress from the State of Washington, prepared statement of .....	63
Miller, Hon. George, Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor .....	1
Prepared statement of .....	10
Tribute to Representative Mary T. Norton .....	2
Biography of Representative Norton .....	6
Levi, Jeffrey, Ph.D., executive director, Trust for America's Health, prepared statement of .....	64
Wamp, Hon. Zach, a Representative in Congress from the State of Tennessee .....	18
Prepared statement of .....	24
Statement of Witnesses:	
Benson, Lori Rose, director, Office of Fitness and Health Education, New York City Department of Education .....	34
Prepared statement of .....	37
Responses to questions for the record .....	66
Brown, Tim, former NFL all-pro player, national chairman, Athletes and Entertainers for Kids .....	42
Prepared statement of .....	44
Keiser, Robert, student advisor to Gov. Charlie Crist, Council on Physical Fitness .....	38
Prepared statement of .....	40
Pate, Dr. Russell, associate vice president for health sciences, professor, Department of Exercise Science, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina .....	29
Prepared statement of .....	31
Responses to questions for the record .....	68
Simmons, Richard, ASK America .....	26
Prepared statement of .....	28
Printed handout .....	69



## **THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION FOR OUR NATION'S CHILDREN**

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**Thursday, July 24, 2008**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Education and Labor**  
**Washington, DC**

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The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:08 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. George Miller [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Kildee, Payne, Woolsey, McCarthy, Tierney, Kucinich, Wu, Holt, Davis of California, Sarbanes, Loeb sack, Altmire, Hare, Courtney, Shea-Porter, Castle, Platts, and Keller.

Also present: Representatives Kaptur, DeLauro, and Sires.

Staff present: Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Alfred Amado, Legislative Fellow for Education; Alice Cain, Senior Education Policy Advisor (K-12); Lynne Campbell, Legislative Fellow for Education; Alejandra Ceja, Senior Budget/Appropriations Analyst; Fran-Victoria Cox, Staff Attorney; Adrienne Dunbar, Education Policy Advisor; Denise Forte, Director of Education Policy; David Hartzler, Systems Administrator; Liz Hollis, Special Assistant to Staff Director/Deputy Director; Lloyd Horwich, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education; Fred Jones, Staff Assistant, Education; Jessica Kahanek, Press Assistant; Ann-Frances Lambert, Special Assistant to the Director of Education Policy; Stephanie Moore, General Counsel; Jill Morningstar, Education Policy Advisor; Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Joe Novotny, Chief Clerk; Rachel Racusen, Communications Director; Meredith Regine, Junior Legislative Associate, Labor; Thomas Webb, Disability Policy Fellow; Margaret Young, Staff Assistant, Education; Mark Zuckerman, Staff Director; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; James Bergeron, Minority Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Cameron Coursen, Minority Assistant Communications Director; Kirsten Duncan, Minority Professional Staff Member; Alexa Marrero, Minority Communications Director; Chad Miller, Minority Professional Staff; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Services Policy; and Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel.

Chairman MILLER [presiding]. The committee will come to order.

We have a committee ceremony this morning just for a couple of minutes, if we might, unveil the portrait of former representative Mary Norton—before the committee.

And I am pleased to be joined by my very good friends, Representative Marcy Kaptur, Representative Rosa DeLauro, and Representative Rush Holt, and Representatives Albio Sires and Donald Payne from New Jersey, which Ms. Norton represented.

She was a true pioneer for women, for workers, and for American families.

Over the past 2 years, the primary focus of this committee has been to strengthen and grow America's middle class. We have worked to help make college affordable and a reality for every qualified student who wants to attend.

We have worked to make our nation's workplace safer and fairer to workers and to ensure that all Americans can receive decent pay and benefits in exchange for their hard work in jobs.

No one embodied these goals or fought harder on behalf of working families than Representative Norton, or "Battling Mary," as she was referred to during the quarter century that she served in Congress.

During her time as chairwoman of this very committee, she paved the ways in many landmark labor laws that have made this country a better place to live and work. She personally shepherded the first Fair Labor Standards Act through the House and established the 40-hour work week and the first minimum wage.

It could not be more fitting that we are honoring Mary today, the same day that millions of minimum-wage workers will receive another pay increase that was enacted by Congress in the last session.

She also fought tirelessly for equal pay for women, an effort this committee is continuing to build on today when we mark up the Paycheck Fairness Act.

I am extremely proud that Mary's portrait will be watching over us as we take another step toward ensuring that all workers are treated fairly and equally. There are many parallels between the challenges that plagued the American economy during Mary's years in the Congress and the struggles that American families are facing today in today's economic downturn.

By hanging her portrait in our hearing room to, we honor the invaluable contributions that Mary made to this Congress and to this country.

And we vow to continue to build on the foundations she first laid decades ago by working to improve the lives of our children, students, and workers so that every family in this country can, again, claim their piece of the American dream.

And with that, I would like to recognize the person most responsible for today's ceremony, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur of Ohio. [Applause.]

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Who chairs this committee makes a huge difference, not just for Mary Norton, but for working people across our country and globe.

What a joy it is to be here today with you.

I know Speaker Pelosi had shepherded this portrait in her personal office after we found it in a closet buried in an annex build-

ing up here on Capitol Hill. What an embarrassment to our country. She belongs here.

And the champion of blue-and pink-collar workers across our nation and symbolic of their great struggle, it is a joy for me to be here with Congresswoman DeLauro. There could be no better spokesperson for women and for the cause of rank-and-file workers anywhere than Rosa.

And, of course, Congressman Rush Holt of New Jersey, who never forgot what Mary Norton's life meant and helped push this long ceaselessly, I thank him so much for that.

And Donald Payne, Dale Kildee, Albio Sires, who did so much to make this day a reality, thank you all.

I just want to state, for the record, that Mary Norton was 49 years of age when she was elected. She was the first Democratic woman elected east of the Mississippi River to serve in this Congress of the United States.

And she was the first woman from an urban center in our country. She said on her election, "No novice in politics was ever more innocent than I."

And upon election, of course, photographers streamed to her home, and she had over 40 reporters before noon in her home. And she said one photographer had to be rebuffed when he asked her to pose for photographs standing by the stove and hanging clothes on the clothesline.

And she informed him that she expected to deal with legislation in Congress, and I do not expect to cook, and I do not expect to wash any clothes in Congress.

But then in a very housewifely manner, she added, "It took days to get the smell out of my living room curtains of the flashlights that were taking this—in those days before smokeless bulbs."

So she did have some clean-up to do after that.

Let me say for the record, also, Mr. Chairman, she was the first woman—first member, male or female, to chair three House committees. In addition to this committee, she chaired the D.C. Committee where she became known as the mayor of Washington, and also House Administration.

She was the eldest daughter of Irish-Catholic immigrant parents, and tragically, she lost her only child and was not able to bear children.

But through the inspiration of a Monsignor Smith in Jersey City, she became a champion of daycare centers, and it was actually her network of daycare centers that provided her with the political base, ultimately, to be elected to the Congress of the United States.

But she never began with that in mind.

It just is a true joy for me to be here today.

And let me just end with this statement. When she served on the D.C. Committee, Representative Frank Bohn on the committee declared, "This is the first time in my life I have been controlled by a woman."

And Norton responded, "It is the first time I have had the privilege of presiding over a body of men, and I rather like the prospect." [Laughter.]

Thank you so very much. Thank you, Chairman Miller. [Applause.]

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and what a delight it is to be here this morning as we celebrate a remarkable woman. And it is the 70th anniversary of probably her most outstanding achievement.

What my colleague, Marcy Kaptur, didn't say about the committee, as you know, when the chair of the labor committee passed away and she was the next in line, excuse me, gentleman, but some of the good-old boys didn't want to see Mary come to be chair. They tried to persuade her to stay on another committee.

And she thought about it, and she said no. I am going to the labor committee, and that is where we can, probably, do some good.

Chairman Miller, let me just say to you—and everyone in this room knows what a fighter you are for the working people of this nation—you have restored this committee's great purpose.

Once again, Marcy, thank you for keeping good—into Rush Holt, into Donald Payne, and Albio Sires, and my colleagues from New Jersey, I am so proud to share this special moment as we recognize the legacy of Mary Norton.

And she was indeed called "Battling Mary." And she laid the foundation that we build on today. She did it, as Marcy has so aptly portrayed, with a skillful blend of strength and with compassion.

And that is why we have introduced a resolution recognizing her leadership and the pile of work that she did driving the four labor standards acts.

As we have been dealing with the Equal Pay Act these days, and amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act, I had looked at—I know my colleagues have—we studied the strength of its framework, and we come to appreciate just what a significant role that this legislation has played in our labor history and our history as a nation.

Minimum wage, overtime pay, child labor laws, her efforts make them possible; they have become the pillars of our fair and our prosperous society today.

And, again, what Marcy—to follow on something that Marcy Kaptur said—during the war, Mary Norton set up daycare centers through the federal government so that the women who were working in the factories could have their children safely taken care of. And without any vision after that war, those daycare centers were dismantled and, fortunately, we are changing that direction.

This is what is so special about the portrait. It not only honors Mary Norton, but her profound legacy. It serves as a reminder why we are here and what we should be fighting for.

And the people that Mary Norton fought for wanted only to share in the American dream: Honest pay for an honest day's work, buy a home, raise a family, celebrate and educate their children; to enjoy the fruits of life in a prosperous country. Mary Norton never forgot that. She never forgot where she came from. We must never forget Mary Norton, a champion of the American worker who saved our nation.

For the years to come, this portrait is a fitting tribute.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. [Applause.]

Chairman MILLER. Congressman Rush Holt?

Mr. HOLT. Thank you, Chairman Miller, and especially thanks to our colleague, Marcy Kaptur, who rescued this portrait from a closet.

And to Speaker Pelosi, who then prominently hung this as a tribute to this outstanding legislator, not just the first woman to run the New Jersey Democratic Party, not just the first woman to head any state's party, not just the first woman to represent an eastern state in Congress, not just the first Democratic woman in Congress, not just the first person to chair three congressional committees, not just a token by any means.

She identified issues of maternity leave, child care, latch-key children, displaced homemakers, equal pay for equal work.

She raised survivor's benefits for women whose sons were killed in the First World War, established the Fair Employment Practice Committee, helped extend Federal Employees Retirement System to secure pensions for elected and executive offices, served as a delegate to international labor in Paris.

But what she said she was most proud of—"More than anything else I have done in my life," she said, "was to pass the Fair Labor Standards Act."

And I particularly wanted to see her portrait hung in this because of, well, our own current-day issues with protecting workplace fairness and my own family's history in protecting wages and hours.

This was a controversial move. We had to fight with the Supreme Court even back then. And she used parliamentary ingenuity to get this protection for the 40-hour work week, for outlawing child labor, for establishing a minimum wage of \$.25. But it did establish a minimum wage. And then she soon saw to it that it was raised to \$.75—a big deal.

A legislator whose career we should honor, and I am pleased that the committee, through Chairman Miller's leadership, will be honoring her as a portrait prominently displayed in the Committee on Education and Labor.

Chairman MILLER. Congressman Sires, Congressman Payne, our New Jersey colleagues, they all represented, at one time or another, the district of Mary Norton.

If you have a quick word you would like to say—

Mr. PAYNE. I will be very short, but it is, indeed, an honor.

Congressman Sires and I both share Jersey City, and so this makes us very, very proud.

It is interesting that we are dealing today with issues of childhood obesity, and we just think of Representative Norton, who was doing this many, many years ago.

And so we are extremely proud of her and we are proud to also serve this great city of Jersey City.

Thank you.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Don.

First, let me thank Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Miller.

Marcy, thank you very much.

Rush, thank you very much.

It really is an honor to be sitting here and unveiling this today, especially with "Battling Mary" and knowing where she came from, Jersey City.

Let me tell you, she must have been a very special woman because it was at a time, in Hudson County, Jersey City, that it was very difficult to be a politician.

The success that she had in Congress is overwhelming. So I am just very proud and very thankful for this unveiling, and I am sure the people back home are going to be very proud that this picture is hanging here today.

Thank you very much.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Now, if my colleagues will join me at the portrait——

Mr. Kildee, Lynn Woolsey, join us also, please. [Applause.]

[A biography of Representative Norton follows:]

### **Mary T. Norton**

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, 1925–1951, DEMOCRAT FROM NEW JERSEY

For a quarter century in the House, colleagues knew Mary T. Norton as “Battling Mary,” a reformer who fought for the labor and the working-class interests of her urban New Jersey district. An apprentice with one of the most notorious Democratic political machines in America, Norton emerged from Jersey City as the first woman to represent an eastern state and eventually chaired four House committees. Norton’s career was defined by her devotion to blue-collar concerns.

Mary Teresa Hopkins was born on March 7, 1875, in Jersey City, New Jersey. She was the second surviving child of Thomas Hopkins, a road construction contractor, and Maria Shea, a governess. Mary kept house after her mother died and graduated from Jersey City High School. She moved to New York City in 1896 and attended Packard Business College. She later worked as a secretary and stenographer until she married Robert Francis Norton in April 1909. To cope with the death of her one-week-old son, Robert, Jr., in 1910, she began working at the Queen’s Daughters Day Nursery and, within three years, became its secretary. By 1916, she was elected nursery president. It was in her capacity as a fundraiser for the nursery that she made a large number of political contacts. Robert Norton, who died in 1934, supported her career to the end.

After World War I, in search of municipal support for the nursery, she met Jersey City’s mayor and powerful political boss, Frank “I Am the Law” Hague. Mayor Hague took office in 1917 and controlled Hudson County politics for three decades with a mixture of patronage, programs for his labor constituency, and, at times, direct intimidation of his opponents. Eager to bring newly enfranchised women into the Democratic Party (and under his political machine), the mayor pressed Norton to enter politics as his protegee. “It’s your duty to organize the women of Jersey City,” Hague commanded. When Norton, who had not been involved in the suffrage movement, protested that she didn’t know politics, Hague snapped back, “Neither does any suffragist.” In 1920, with Hague’s backing, Norton was the first woman named to the New Jersey Democratic Committee and, in 1921, was elected its vice chairman, serving in that capacity until 1931. She became the first woman to head any state party when she was elevated to chairman in 1932 (she served until 1935 and was again named chairman from 1940 to 1944).

On November 5, 1924, with Hague’s key endorsement, Norton won election to a Jersey City U.S. House seat—recently vacated by the retiring Representative Charles O’Brien. As the first woman to represent an eastern state, she beat Republican Douglas Story by more than 18,000 votes (62 percent of the total vote). Re-elected in 1926 by a landslide 83 percent of the vote, she dominated her subsequent 11 elections appealing to a heavily Democratic constituency, increased by reapportionment in 1932.

During her first term, Norton received an assignment on the World War Veterans Legislation Committee. She would later serve on and eventually chair four committees: Labor, District of Columbia, Memorials, and House Administration. As a freshman she also encountered head-on the House patriarchy. Once, when a colleague deferred to her as a “lady,” Norton retorted, “I am no lady, I’m a Member of Congress, and I’ll proceed on that basis.”

Although she befriended Hague for life, Norton maintained that the mayor had not sought to influence her vote in Congress. She shared fundamentally, however, in Hague’s desire to promote the interests of the district’s mostly working-class and Roman Catholic constituency. In keeping with the views of the American Federation of Labor, Norton opposed the Equal Rights Amendment which, she feared, would

erode legislative protections for women in industry. While rejecting such a constitutional amendment, however, Norton embraced a role as a leading advocate for legislation to improve the lives of working-class families and women. She favored labor interests, introducing legislation to exempt the first \$5,000 of a family's income from taxation, creating mechanisms to mediate labor-management disputes in the coal mining industry, raising survivor benefits for women whose sons were killed in World War I, and opposing the Smoot—Hawley Tariff in the late 1920s. Norton also was the first legislator to introduce bills to investigate and, later, to repeal Prohibition as codified in the 18th Amendment. It was eventually repealed in 1933. In 1929 she opposed the Gillett Bill, which would have eased restrictions on the dissemination of birth control information. A staunch Catholic, Norton argued that birth control literature would not be required if “men and women would practice self-control.”

When Democrats won control of the U.S. House in 1931, Norton, as ranking Democrat of the Committee on the District of Columbia, became its chairwoman. When a male member exclaimed, “This is the first time in my life I have been controlled by a woman,” Norton replied, “It’s the first time I’ve had the privilege of presiding over a body of men, and I rather like the prospect.” She was dubbed the “Mayor of Washington” during her tenure as chair from 1931 to 1937. It was an immense job. Since the federal government then administered the District of Columbia, all bills and petitions related to city management (an average of 250 per week) came across Norton’s desk. She was acclaimed, however, for her support for a bill to provide the District of Columbia with self-government. Though she failed in that endeavor, Norton won Public Works Administration funds to build a hospital for tuberculosis patients, improved housing, secured the first old-age pension bill for District residents, and legalized liquor sales and boxing.

In 1937, when Labor Committee Chairman William P. Connery, Jr., died, Norton resigned her chairmanship of the District Committee to succeed him as head of the powerful Labor Committee. She had been the second-ranking Democrat on the panel since 1929. When the Democrats gained the majority in 1931, Norton exercised increased influence over the evolution and passage of major legislation. By the time she became chair in June 1937, the so-called Second New Deal was in full swing. While much of the legislation passed during the first phase of the New Deal (1933—1935) focused on economic recovery, the second wave of programs sought to alleviate poverty and provide a social safety net that included Social Security benefits and unemployment insurance.

Norton’s crowning legislative achievement came with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which she personally shepherded through committee and onto the House Floor for a vote. The only significant New Deal reform to pass in President Franklin Roosevelt’s second term, the act provided for a 40-hour work week, outlawed child labor, and set a minimum wage of 25 cents per hour. To get the controversial bill out of the Rules Committee, which determined what legislation was to be debated on the floor and which was controlled by “anti-New Deal” conservative Democrats, Norton resorted to a little-used parliamentary procedure known as the discharge petition. She got 218 of her colleagues (half the total House membership, plus one) to sign the petition to bring the bill to a vote. The measure failed to pass, but Norton again circulated a discharge petition and managed to get a revised measure to the floor, which passed. “I’m prouder of getting that bill through the House than anything else I’ve done in my life,” Norton recalled. In 1940, she teamed up with Majority Leader John McCormack of Massachusetts to fight off revisions to the act and scolded her colleagues for trying to reduce the benefits to working-class Americans, among which was a \$12.60 weekly minimum wage. Norton declared, it “is a pittance for any family to live on \* \* \* I think that when Members get their monthly checks for \$833 they cannot look at the check and face their conscience if they refuse to vote for American workers who are getting only \$12.60 a week.”

During World War II, Norton used her position on the Labor Committee to fight for equal pay for women laborers. She pushed for the creation of a permanent Fair Employment Practice Committee to prevent racial and gender discrimination in hiring and to secure pensions for elective and executive offices by extending the federal employee’s retirement system. But she found much of her experience as Labor Committee chair in wartime frustrating because of encroachments on the panel’s oversight and the bleak prospects of women’s place in the postwar workforce. Critics charged that her committee was “ineffectual” because the War Labor Board and the War Manpower Commission largely determined labor policies. Even House committees, in particular Naval Affairs, wrote legislation that fell properly under Labor’s jurisdiction. She blamed part of these intrusions on the fact that the Labor Committee was headed by a woman. “Those who really know our social system, know that women have never had very much opportunity,” she said. She forecast that

after the war, women would be pressed to vacate jobs and back into the home to make way for demobilized GIs seeking employment.

In 1947, when Republicans regained control of the House and Norton lost her chairmanship to New Jersey's Fred H. Hartley, she resigned her Labor Committee seat in protest. "He has attended only 10 meetings of this committee in 10 years," Norton declared. "I refuse to serve under him." During her final term in Congress, when the Democrats wrested back majority control, she chaired the House Administration Committee.

At age 75, after serving 12 terms, Norton declined to run for re-election in 1950. She served briefly as a consultant to the Women's Advisory Committee on Defense Manpower at the Department of Labor in 1951 and 1952. She left Washington to settle in Greenwich, Connecticut, to live near one of her sisters. Norton died there on August 2, 1959.

#### FURTHER READING

- Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "Mary T. Norton," <http://bioguide.congress.gov>
- Mitchell, Gary. "Women Standing for Women: The Early Political Career of Mary T. Norton." *New Jersey History* 96 (Spring—Summer 1978): 27—42.
- Rees, Maureen. "Mary Norton: A Grand Girl." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 47 (December 1985): 59—75.
- Tomlinson, Barbara J. "Making Their Way: A Study of New Jersey Congresswomen, 1924—1994." Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick, 1996.

#### MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ), Alexander Library Department of Special Collections and Archives. Papers: 1920—1960, 10 volumes and 10 boxes. Correspondence includes letters from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman. Also includes congressional political subjects file, speeches and writings, biographical data, photographs, and scrapbooks. The unpublished memoirs of Mary T. Norton and correspondence concerning possible publication are included. A finding aid is available in the repository.

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Chairman MILLER. If you all bear with us 1 minute here, we will just make a transition to our upcoming hearing.

A quorum being present, the hearing will come to order.

And if I might ask the witnesses if they would take their seats—first, we have Congressman Kind and Congressman Wamp.

And we will have our opening statements, and we will be with you in a moment.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 12-A, any member may submit an opening statement in writing which will be made part of the permanent record.

And the chair now recognizes himself for the purposes of making an opening statement. I want to welcome all of you here today to the hearing of the benefits of physical and health education for our nation's children.

In the past 30 years, the number of obese children has risen dramatically across the United States. The statistics are nothing short of alarming. According to a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 30 percent of U.S. school children are now obese.

Since 1980, the percentage of 6- to 11-year-olds who are classified as obese has almost tripled.

Overweight kids are now vulnerable for diseases that once were a rarity among children, including Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and breathing irregularities while sleeping. Overweight children and adolescents are also at a greater risk of developing heart disease, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

This onslaught of obesity-related diseases also comes with dire financial consequences for our country. The CDC estimates that the cost of treating diseases linked to obesity grew by \$23 billion between 1995 and 2003.

In other words, it is clear that childhood obesity has become one of the most pressing challenges facing our nation. The question is: What are we going to do about it?

Today, we will examine how we can best combat this staggering obesity epidemic and improve the health, well-being, and success of our school children.

While today's hearing will focus primarily on how we can increase physical education in our schools, we know that improving exercise is only one-half of the equation. Providing more nutritious foods for school children is also critical.

In preparation for next year's reauthorization of our federal child nutrition programs, this committee has been looking closely at what we can do to help schools offer healthy, low-cost meals that children will want to eat. And I hope that today's hearing helps inform us on that effort.

As a 2006 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office concluded, the most important way to fight obesity is to increase physical exercise.

But unfortunately, America's school children are less physically active than ever before. Children are spending more and more of their free time watching TV, surfing the Internet, and playing video games.

The typical American child now spends almost 45 hours a week using media outside of the school.

Just last week, the National Institute of Health released a new study showing that kids are exercising far less intensely as they move into their teenage years. At the very time that kids are exercising less, schools are also cutting back on recess and physical education classes.

Daily physical education classes, once routine in schools, are now offered by less than 10 percent of all public schools. Although, the National Association for Sport and Physical Activity recommends at least 150 minutes of exercise a week for elementary students and 225 minutes a week for middle and high school students, most students face a starkly different reality.

A 2005 report of the National Center for Education Statistics shows that, nationwide, public schools offer about 85 minutes of exercise for first graders and only about 98 minutes a week for sixth graders.

This is disturbing on many levels. Multiple studies have shown that regular physical activity has positive effects on student learning. Not only does consistent exercise help students succeed academically, but it also can strengthen their concentration levels and cognitive skills.

Given these trends, it is extremely disappointing that the budget that has been submitted to the Congress eliminates federal funding that would help expand physical education programs in schools.

Schools are already being strained by skyrocketing food and energy prices and declining federal and state investments. Terminating this vital grant program takes an unfair toll on school chil-

dren, especially low-income children who often have fewer opportunities to exercise outside of school.

It goes without saying that the nation's childhood obesity crisis poses enormous threats to our long-term health and economic strength.

Today, we will hear from a panel of experts who are well aware of the benefits that physical education and nutrition education can bring to our nation's students.

Each of you is a true leader in these efforts to fight for childhood obesity, and I thank you for joining us today. And I look forward to your expertise and your thoughts on this matter.

And at this time, I would like to recognize Congressman Keller, the ranking member on the subcommittee, for the purpose of an opening statement.

**Prepared Statement of Hon. George Miller, Chairman, Committee on  
Education and Labor**

Good Morning. Welcome to today's hearing on "The Benefits of Physical and Health Education for Our Nation's Children."

In the past 30 years, the number of obese children has risen dramatically across the United States. The statistics are nothing short of alarming.

According to a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 30 percent of

U.S. schoolchildren are now obese. Since 1980, the percentage of 6-11 year olds who are classified as obese has almost tripled.

Overweight kids are now more vulnerable to diseases that once were a rarity among children, including type II diabetes, hypertension, and breathing irregularities while sleeping. Overweight children and adolescents are also at greater risk of developing heart disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

This onslaught of obesity-related diseases also comes with dire financial consequences for our country. The CDC estimates that the cost of treating diseases linked to obesity grew by \$23 billion between 1995 and 2003.

In other words, it is clear that childhood obesity has become one of the most pressing challenges facing our nation. The question is: What are we going to do about it?

Today we will examine how we can best combat this staggering obesity epidemic and improve the health, well-being, and success of our schoolchildren.

While today's hearing will focus primarily on how we can increase physical education in our schools, we know that improving exercise is only one half of the equation. Providing more nutritious foods for schoolchildren is also critical.

In preparation for next year's reauthorization of our federal child nutrition programs, this Committee has been looking closely at how we can help schools offer healthy, low-cost meals that children will want to eat, and I hope today's hearing helps inform this effort. As a 2006 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office concluded, the most important way to fight obesity is to increase physical exercise.

But unfortunately, America's children are less physically active than ever before. Children are spending more and more of their free time watching TV, surfing the internet, or playing video games. The typical American child now spends almost 45 hours a week using media outside of school.

Just last week, the National Institutes of Health released a new study showing that kids are exercising less intensely as they move into their teenage years.

At the very time that kids are exercising less, schools are also cutting back on recess and physical education classes.

Daily physical education classes, once routine in schools, are now offered by less than 10 percent of all public schools.

Although the National Association for Sport and Physical Activity recommends at least 150 minutes of exercise a week for elementary students, and 225 minutes a week for middle and high school students, most students face a starkly different reality.

A 2005 report by the National Center for Education Statistics shows that nationwide, public schools offer about 85 minutes of exercise for first-graders, and only about 98 minutes a week for sixth-graders.

This is disturbing on many levels. Multiple studies have shown that regular physical activity has positive effects on student learning.

Not only does consistent exercise help students succeed academically, but it can also strengthen their concentration levels and cognitive skills.

Given these trends, it is extremely disappointing that the Bush administration's latest—and final—budget eliminates federal funding that would help expand physical education programs in schools.

Schools are already being strained by skyrocketing food and energy prices and declining federal and state investments. Terminating this vital grant program takes an unfair toll on schoolchildren—especially low-income children who often have fewer opportunities to exercise outside of school.

It goes without saying that the nation's child obesity crisis poses enormous threats to our long-term health and economic strength.

America needs and deserves a President who is committed to working to solve it. Today we will hear from a panel of experts who are well aware of the benefits that physical and nutrition education can bring to our nation's students.

Each of you is a true leader in our efforts to fight child obesity, and I thank you for joining us today.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts. Thank you.

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Mr. KELLER. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I also want to thank our very impressive panel of witnesses for being here today to discuss the serious problem of childhood obesity and the benefits of physical education.

Last month's cover story of Time Magazine says it all: Our supersized kids. We have a childhood obesity epidemic. Two out of three adults in the United States are overweight. One out of three children are overweight.

Childhood obesity rates have tripled since 1980.

We are now seeing children diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and depression.

What is the primary cause of our children's expanding waistlines? Are children eating differently than they did 30 years ago? Well, Dr. Kenneth Cooper, the father of the aerobics movement, shed light to these issues when he appeared before our education committee.

He said, "Increased calories are most definitely a factor in the rise of overweight children, but it is absolutely not the only cause. A wholesale lack of physical activity is the primary reason for expanding waistlines.

"And 30 years ago, did children come home from school and eat cookies or potato chips before dinner? Of course, they did. But the difference is they consumed these snacks after walking or riding their bikes from school. Then they went outside and played with their friends unlike today when they sit on the sofa and play video games or watch television."

Of course, Dr. Cooper is right. Our kids need to spend less time with the PlayStation and more time on the playground.

Although childhood obesity is a serious challenge, I approach this subject with a great deal of optimism and hope. As someone who has lost 100 pounds over the past year, I have seen first-hand the power of healthy habits.

As parents, experts tell us there are three healthy habits our children should follow at the end of day. First, never skip breakfast. Second, play outside 1 hour a day. Third, eat five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Those are the exact same healthy habits that I follow and will for life; that is, eating a healthy breakfast, running six miles a day, and eating lots of fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.

Exercise is also the secret to reducing stress. By sweating big time in the gym, you don't sweat the small stuff in life.

In the interest of straight talk, I have to confess that there can be a down side to weight loss. As the father of four small children, including two girls under two, my wife has taken advantage of my increased energy levels. [Laughter.]

She now makes me wash dishes and change diapers. Frankly, my life was easier as a fat guy. [Laughter.]

But I digress about my own problems. What can we do to encourage more physical activity in our public schools? There the at least three things.

First, on a national level, we can pass the Fit Kids Act, H.R. 3257, co-authored by Congressman Ron Kind and Zach Wamp, to help bring back physical education in our public schools.

Congressman Kind and Wamp are co-chairs of the Congressional Fitness Caucus and, in my opinion, the top two leaders in the United States Congress when it comes to promoting physical fitness. I am honored to be a co-sponsor of their important legislation.

The second thing we can do is to use our bully pulpit to encourage more governors to bring back P.E. into their state's public school systems.

For example, I am very proud that in my home state of Florida, Governor Charlie Crist recently successfully pushed through legislation requiring physical education classes for all elementary and middle school students.

A third thing we can do is to go into our local public schools and encourage physical fitness either by helping to pass out the President's Council on Physical Fitness Awards or by creating our own congressional fitness challenge awards.

For example, on May 2nd of this year, I took two-time Olympic gold medalist, Dr. Dot Richardson, with me to Hillcrest Elementary School in my hometown of Orlando, Florida. Dot was the short stop on the women's Olympic softball team and she hit the game-winning homerun to win the gold medal in the 1996 Olympics. She then won a second gold medal in 2000.

As an orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Dot Richardson showed the kids that they can be both smart and athletic at the same time. Together, Dot and I spoke to the kids, passed out the Presidential Council on Physical Fitness Awards, and handed out awards that I created from my own congressional fitness caucus for the boys and girls in each class who showed the most improvement over the course of the year.

We also made some mistakes.

The P.E. teacher selected the fastest girl and fastest boy in the school to challenge Dot and I respectively to a foot race.

We accepted the challenge. Regrettably, both Dot and I crushed our fifth grade competitors. We were then loudly booed by over 300 kids and some of their parents.

Next time, I am going to let my kid win. I can't afford to lose the votes.

In conclusion, I want to thank this amazing group of witnesses. We have the top two congressional leaders on physical fitness. We have a Heisman Trophy winner. We have Richard Simmons, perhaps, the most famous and big-hearted fit advocate of our generation.

We also have several other well-respected experts who we look forward to hearing from.

Thank you all very much for being with us today. [Applause.]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Ric Keller, a Representative in Congress From the State of Florida**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to thank our impressive panel of witnesses for being here today to discuss the serious problem of childhood obesity, and the benefits of physical education.

Two out of three adults in the United States are overweight. One out of three children are overweight. Childhood obesity rates have tripled since 1980.

We're now seeing children diagnosed with type II diabetes, heart disease, and depression.

What's the primary cause of our children's expanding waistlines? Are children eating differently than they did 30 years ago?

Well, Dr. Kenneth Cooper, the father of the aerobics movement, shed light on these issues when he appeared before our committee. He said:

"Increased calories are most definitely a factor in the rise of overweight children, but it's absolutely not the only cause \* \* \* A wholesale lack of physical activity is the primary reason for expanding waistlines \* \* \* And 30 yrs ago, did children come home from school and eat cookies or potato chips before dinner? Of course, they did. But the difference is they consumed these snacks after walking or riding their bikes from school. Then they went outside and played with their friends, unlike today, when they sit on a sofa and play video games or watch television."

Of course, Dr. Cooper is right. Our kids need to spend less time with the Playstation, and more time on the playground.

Although childhood obesity is a serious challenge, I approach this subject with a great deal of optimism and hope. As someone who has lost 100 lbs over the past year, I've seen firsthand the power of healthy habits.

As parents, experts tell us there are three healthy habits our children should follow everyday.

First, never skip breakfast.

Second, play outside one hour a day.

Third, eat five servings of fruits and vegetables everyday.

Those are the exact same healthy habits that I follow, and will for life. That is, eating a healthy breakfast, running 6 miles a day, and eating lots of fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.

Exercise is also the secret to reducing stress. By sweating big time in the gym, you don't sweat the small stuff in life.

In the interest of straight talk, I have to confess that there can be a downside to weight loss. As the father of four small children, including two girls under two, my wife has taken advantage of my increased energy levels. She now makes me wash dishes, and change diapers. Frankly, my life was easier as a fat guy. But, I digress.

What can we do to encourage more physical activity in our public schools? There are at least 3 things:

First, on the national level, we can pass the Fit Kids Act, H.R. 3257, co-authored by Congressmen Ron Kind and Zach Wamp to help bring back physical education in our public schools. Congressmen Kind and Wamp are co-chairs of the Congressional Fitness Caucus, and, in my opinion, the two top leaders in the US Congress when it comes to promoting physical fitness. I'm honored to be a cosponsor of their important legislation.

The second thing we can do is to use our bully pulpit to encourage more governors to bring back PE into their states' public school system. For example, I'm very proud that, in my home state of Florida, Governor Charlie Crist recently successfully pushed through legislation requiring physical education classes for all elementary and middle school students in Florida.

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Together, Dot and I spoke to the kids, passed out the President's Council on Physical Fitness Awards, and handed out awards I created from my own Congressional Fitness Challenge for the boys and girls in each class who showed the most improvement over the course of the year.

We also made some mistakes. The PE teacher selected the fastest girl and fastest boy in the school to challenge Dot and I, respectively, to a footrace. We accepted the challenge. Regrettably, both Dot and I crushed our 5th grade competitors. We were then loudly booed by over 300 kids, and some of their parents. Next time, I'm gonna let my kid win. I can't afford to lose the votes.

In conclusion, I want to thank this amazing group of witnesses. We have the top two congressional leaders on physical fitness. We have a Heisman Trophy winner. We have Richard Simmons, perhaps the most famous and big-hearted fitness advocate of our generation. We also have several other well respected experts who we look forward to hearing from.

Thank you all for being with us today.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Before I turn to the witnesses, I would like to recognize one of our staff members who participated in organizing this hearing and will be leaving us next month, and that is Jill Morningstar.

Stand up, Jill. [Applause.]

Jill has been with us relatively for only a short time, but in that short time, she has had a tremendous impact on our work here on the committee.

She has been a critical member of our No Child Left Behind team, offering not just her technical knowledge on various issues, such as testing and English-learner standards, but also her political skills and her understanding of the civil rights and education communities.

She brought with her a high level of energy and enthusiasm of the job and has never hesitated in her role as my policy adviser.

We ask a lot from our staff, and Jill has always responded. In fact, she brought Tim Brown to us today even though she is a passionate Patriots fan. [Laughter.]

We would never have hired you if we knew that.

Jill, we are going to miss you and all of your contributions and all of your expertise. And thank you for your time and dedication to the committee's agenda.

With that, I would like to turn to our first panel, and I want to join my colleague, Ric Keller, in saying that I am introducing two individuals who have taken this issue to heart.

They are very persistent. They pester you all the time. It is the only thing they want to talk to you about no matter where you are. And as a result of that, we are here today. And so they are moving the agenda.

First is Congressman Ron Kind, who has represented the people of western Wisconsin's third congressional district since 1996. Congressman Kind is a member of the House Ways and Means Committee and the National Resources Committee.

Our next witness will be Congressman Zach Wamp, who represents the third district of Tennessee. He is a member of the House Appropriations Committee and the ranking member on the

Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. And he has served 10 years on the Energy and Water Subcommittee.

And I joke with him a lot because I know whatever they talk to me about, we are going to end up talking about physical fitness, obesity, exercise, and all of the rest of it. And we are very appreciative of your persistence on this matter. And we look forward to your testimony.

And Ron, we will begin with you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RON KIND, A REPRESENTATIVE IN  
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

Mr. KIND. Thank you, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Keller, and members of the committee.

It is good to be home.

In my first 10 years here in Congress, I had the pleasure of serving on this committee, and I especially appreciate the——

Chairman MILLER. We do an inordinately good job here training people for membership on other committees.

Mr. KIND. That is right.

Well, I know the important job that you do here. And we apologize for our persistence, but we also realize that we truly are preaching to the choir here.

The members of this committee certainly understand the challenge that we are facing with childhood health generally in this country. And it is obvious that we have a lot of support behind us, and you are going to hear it with the distinguished second panel, the real star power that is here today.

So I am going to try to get to the point and try to abbreviate my remarks.

But, you know, the number one health care crisis that our children are facing today—it is not cancer, it is not accidents, it is not drugs or alcohol or smoking. It is the advent of childhood obesity and the early onset of Type 2 juvenile diabetes and all of the consequences that flow from that.

And we realize, too, that we truly need a comprehensive societal approach in this country to have any meaningful impact to address this issue.

Kids, wherever they are, need positive reinforcement in whatever setting they find themselves; in the home, in their neighborhoods, communities, even in their schools. And the Fit Kids legislation that Zach and I and Representative Inslee have introduced with over 60 co-sponsors, many of whom are sitting here on this committee, addresses just one aspect of that comprehensive plan.

I commend Representative Sarbanes for his No Child Left Inside legislation that is worthy of moving forward and getting implemented as well. It is another piece to this overall puzzle.

But the trend lines have been very discouraging, and if we don't get out ahead of this issue soon, there are going to be deep societal consequences that will result.

And the studies are clear, and they have been coming in by the loads. So we know that increased physical activity leads to better performance in the school. We know that it is, you know, virtually impossible to develop a healthy mind without a healthy body.

We know this affects kids at all ages, at all levels of development, and we know that with the right type of physical regimen in school, the teachers report back with decreased disciplinary problems in the classroom, more attention, less drop-out rates, higher school test scores.

It is a win-win-win-win all around.

And the legislation that we have offered would refocus and have a reemphasis of physical education in our schools. And we all know that it is a patchwork out there. Some states are doing better. Some school districts certainly are doing better than others.

But it is not uniform throughout the country, and that is what we are trying to accomplish with the legislation.

We also realize that our request to have this included in the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act isn't going to happen this year for a variety of reasons.

The initial legislation that we introduced was hoping to make this a part of the multiple measurements of progress in schools. There have been a variety of concerns raised over that issue, and we are willing to compromise even though we feel that it was the right approach to begin with, but if by compromising, we can move this legislation sooner, in fact right away, we are willing to do that and then have a broader discussion as far as how this will fit into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Ed Act when it does come up, hopefully, sometime next year.

But it is an overriding issue, and we are going to need support at all levels, including the celebrities of our country.

And we have got Richard Simmons, who has been an absolute champion in promoting children's health throughout the country. And those of us who know Richard, you can't help but love Richard because of the energy and the compassion that he brings to the subject. And I would venture to guess virtually all of us in this committee room know Richard and his history and his cause to improve the health of our country.

But I will also venture to guess that the hundreds of schools that he has gone in to visit and the kids he has worked with, they don't know who Richard Simmons is. But within a couple of minutes of being in his presence, they naturally gravitate to his energy. He is a magnet for them.

The promotion that he has done has been outstanding. I have had the pleasure of watching him on numerous talk shows promoting kids' health and Fit Kids generally. And the American people get it.

When he tells them, the live audience, what he is up to, they typically break out in spontaneous applause because they know we need to be doing more as a country to address kids' health and also, you know, the role that physical education can provide in that.

A couple of years ago when I was sitting on the committee, the committee had a hearing on the integration of classroom curriculum into P.E. courses. And it is exciting because this brings in all of the students.

The P.E. today is not the P.E. we knew growing up; kickball, dodge ball, or organized sports. Physical education, now, can incorporate all kids at all levels, at all athletic abilities.

And as Richard will probably testify to as well, it is a large element of self-esteem.

And we also need, you know, celebrities like Tim Brown who is here to testify, the professional athletes and our society. Whether they like it or not, they are looked up to by our kids.

I have got two little boys myself who idolize the Green Bay Packers and everything about Brett Favre and these sports heroes. And they pay very close attention to what they do on and off the field and what they say.

And with the help of people like Tim Brown and Reggie Bush and Shaquille O'Neil and other professional athletes, we just need to penetrate this message, and over and over again give the kids the positive reinforcement that they desperately need so that they can start making healthy lifestyle choices from day one which will continue throughout their entire life.

We know Fit Kids isn't going to be the answer to the great challenge of childhood obesity. We think it is an important part of the overall puzzle that we are trying to piece together here.

And with the committee's help, and with some compromises with us and working with the committee to get the legislation done in the right manner, we are hoping, maybe, with the limited time we have left yet this year, this might be an appropriate bill for the suspension calendar given the wide bipartisan support that it has gotten so far.

And I just want to conclude, too, in commending the American Heart Association for the unbelievable job that they have done through these as far as promoting health and children's health, but also their support for Fit Kids and the effort they have made in spreading the word throughout the country.

I know we have been preaching to the choir here. You guys understand that. You know the statistics and the trend lines, and we will look forward to working with you in the coming days to see if we might be able to get this package on the floor before the end of the session.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Kind follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Ron Kind, a Representative in Congress From the State of Wisconsin**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the importance of physical and health education for our children.

I would also like to thank Representative Sarbanes for his leadership on the No Child Left Inside Act. As a proud cosponsor of this bill, I look forward to supporting it when it comes before the full House of Representatives for a vote. Finally, I would like to thank Richard Simmons for his tireless advocacy on the importance of fitness and physical activity.

This hearing could not come at a more important time. Rates of childhood obesity have reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Currently 25 million children in America are obese. The childhood obesity rate has tripled since 1980, and continues to rise. It is estimated that by 2010, twenty percent of children in the U.S. will be obese.

The consequences of this epidemic are significant and disheartening. Overweight children and teens are much more likely to develop cardiovascular disease, Type II diabetes, asthma, sleep apnea, and various forms of cancer. Because of the increased prevalence of these conditions, today's children might become the first generation in American history to have shorter lives than their parents.

In addition to the impact obesity has on children's health and well-being, it also has a staggering effect on our nation's economy. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the direct health care costs of obesity were more than \$60 billion in 2002. Half of these costs are paid for by Medicare and Medicaid. We cannot solve our health care crisis without addressing the obesity crisis.

Research suggests that the childhood obesity epidemic is largely due to a decline in regular physical activity and a diet high in empty and fat-laden calories. A lack of regular physical activity not only hurts a child's health, it can also affect their academic development, as research also shows that healthy children learn more effectively and are higher academic achievers. Simply put, healthy minds need healthy bodies.

With the increase of video games and television usage, schools are one of the few remaining places where children have an environment that encourages physical activity. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources and competing academic demands and testing, many schools are cutting physical education programs. Between 1991 and 2003, enrollment of high school students in daily physical education classes fell from 42 percent to 28 percent.

That is why I joined with Representatives Zach Wamp and Jay Inslee in sponsoring the Fitness Integrated with Teaching Kids Act or FIT Kids Act, H.R. 3257. This bill would help schools provide a comprehensive physical education that would give all children an opportunity—regardless of their background—to learn healthy habits and get moving. This would improve their math and reading test scores, get to the root of the obesity epidemic, and get kids on a healthy path early in life.

Specifically, this bill would provide information to parents and the public by requiring all schools, districts, and states to report on students' physical activity. This information would include the amount of time spent in required physical education in relation to the recommended national standard and the percentage of age-appropriate physical education curriculum and certified physical education teachers.

In addition, the bill promotes physical education and activity in school programs, supports professional development for faculty and staff to promote kids' healthy lifestyles and physical activity, and authorizes a study and pilot program to support effective ways to combat childhood obesity and improve healthy living and physical activity for all children.

Finally, while section 4 of the FIT Kids Act adds physical education to the multiple measures for determining accountability with No Child Left Behind, Mr. Wamp and I only intended this language to be a 'placeholder' indicating our support for physical education to be included in any modified assessment of schools' progress that may be crafted during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We therefore would not object to the removal of this section.

Parents are concerned about the childhood obesity epidemic and believe that schools are a good starting point to address this problem. According to an extensive study done by the Trust for America's Health, less than one-third of adults think that children participate in adequate amounts of physical activity during the school day.

The FIT Kids Act is an important step in making our children more physically active. By teaching kids healthy habits early in life and increasing their physical activity, we will help reduce childhood obesity, improve academic scores, save billions of dollars in health care costs, and save lives.

Thank you again for showing your support for improving the lives of our children through increased physical activity and education. I believe this is one of the most important issues facing us today and I look forward to working with the committee on this issue.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you. [Applause.]  
Zach?

**STATEMENT OF HON. ZACH WAMP, A REPRESENTATIVE IN  
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE**

Mr. WAMP. Chairman George Miller, thank you for your true belief in the benefits of physical activity and wellness. Usually, when I bother you, you are on the bicycle and you are sweating profusely, and I am very proud of you.

Chairman Kildee, thank you for leading with us and believing in us well.

For Ranking Member Keller, he is the fitness caucus hero of the decade because nearly 6 years ago, I founded the Congressional Fitness Caucus to educate, advocate, and sometimes legislate solutions to our health care dilemma today.

Ric Keller did it the old-fashioned way: Without surgery, totally by fitness and diet. Wellness, the model—how do you lose a hundred pounds the old-fashioned way? He did it through sweat and really watching what he ate, with patience, the deliberate way.

And we are so very proud of what you have done, Ric Keller. You are the model for how to lead by example, and we are grateful for your leadership.

We can't—

[Applause.]

Thank you. We can't always legislate these solutions, that is why I say educate and advocate. But sometimes you need to legislate, and I want to tell you how proud I am of Ron Kind and Fit Kids and the way he just presented the case.

And I don't want to be redundant. You can read my written statements.

So let me just hit a couple of points that I think are very, very important here as we look toward preventive health care solutions in the future for America.

Whether it is President McCain or President Obama, health care is going to be a central issue because for too long, we have basically avoided this massive, complex issue and it has focused too much on the end result, Medicare, long-term care, the expenses associated with the end of your life, when the most bang for the buck is in prevention.

And it starts early. By the fourth grade, every American should know the consequences of physical inactivity. They should know that there is a dial in their life that must be adjusted. Calorie burn versus calorie intake.

They should know by the fourth grade that if they are sentenced to a life of challenges and physical problems associated with obesity and hypertension and high blood pressure, they may never live to their fullest potential.

That is what Richard Simmons has dedicated his entire career to is saving that one child through education and understanding of the consequences of physical inactivity.

We are overmedicating the next generation of Americans. And all the research and the data is in, and the most effective anti-depressant in the history of the world is sweat. The most effective anti-depressant in the history of the world is sweat. You sleep better, you produce more, you have a higher quality of life if you get a regular regimen of physical activity.

There is a new book out called "Spark." It identifies the research and the data of how much more you comprehend and learn if you have a regimen of physical activity in your life. For the good of the bottom line in education, physical activity, physical education must be integrated into education.

No Child Left Behind has been controversial, but all it is is an extension of the Primary and Secondary Education Act. We are going to come back to it at some point, and when we do, we must

bring two things back into the mix besides science, reading, and math.

I would argue that our physical education and arts education, both of which have been squeezed out because of testing and mandates and the focus with limited budgets on how you are going to be held accountable.

But Thomas Jefferson said almost 200 years ago, over 200 years ago, a child who is not physically well struggles with learning. Thomas Jefferson said that.

It is more true in 2008 than it is ever been. A child who is not physically well struggles with learning. A child who is chronically obese or has hypertension and high blood pressure has a huge problem with learning and all the research points to it.

So please help us. Incentivize exercise back into public education. And it starts at home. Moms, dads, it starts at home. You control the refrigerator. You control the TV time. You control the computer time. You control the outside time. Get your kids back outside. Tell them to go out and play, run, burn, get tired. Come home and sleep and get up and go at it.

And in the schoolhouse, integrate a certain amount of time for stretching and wellness and physical education. Bring the T-shirts back. Bring the competition back. Make it fun. But let us sweat and let us be productive, America.

Thank you, and I yield back. [Applause.]

Chairman MILLER. Zach Wamp uses more calories testifying than most members of Congress burn all day. I know you have competing calls on your time this morning. I would just like to ask one question, if I might, and then, quickly, if my colleagues have a question.

In your legislation, one of the things that intrigues me about it—and you hit upon this, Zach—is the idea that exercise and health education and nutritional education can, in fact, be incorporated in the teaching of other subjects.

And one of the things we are looking at in No Child Left Behind is to try to convey this because when we look at successful schools, when we look at schools that are doing better than their peers, very often, what we see is them taking mathematics and incorporating it into the music course.

We see them taking history and incorporating it into the reading. We see them taking their local community and using it as a pallet to teach kids about culture and history and get them engaged in those areas.

And I don't think it takes a lot of thought to figure out that life sciences can be taught, that health education can be taught, that mathematics can be taught all around exercise.

Some people are concerned that we want to federally mandate P.E. The fact of the matter is, in high capacity schools with talented teachers, they are able to incorporate this into the other subject matters. You don't have to shove one aside to do the other if you are really thinking creatively about it.

And what—of course, what we are starting to see is that connection very often then connects student to their mathematics course because they now see that as a reality or they see the connection.

Earlier this week, we had Phil Mickelson before the committee discussing mathematics. He and his wife have started an institute along with Exxon-Mobil to show mathematics to teachers .

We played this ad that they put together which shows the mathematics of a golf swing, the mathematics of a sand shot, the mathematics of a putt. And he went through that. Last week, I had a chance to spend time with John Madden on John Madden Football and the mathematics components of one of the most popular video games in the country.

And now, turning that into a teaching tool for kids—getting them engaged through football but getting them to understand that you can't be smart in football if you don't know angles, if you don't know percentages, and all the things that come with it.

For those who think that this is just another mandate, you ought to understand what we are saying is increase the capacity of the school to integrate this into the other things you are also doing.

That is not to say—

Mr. KIND. The other aspect of what you are describing, the integration of classroom curriculum and P.E. is making school more attractive to kids who we might otherwise lose and drop out.

I was just in a school in western Wisconsin, not too long ago that integrated mathematics and an archery program, Archery in the Schools program. And it is not the most strenuous thing, but it is getting these kids up and going.

And I was talking to a couple of high at-risk kids who are participating. And they said they were bored with school. They were sick. They didn't look forward to going to it until they incorporated this program in the school. And that is what was motivating them to go.

And they were using mathematical skills to participate, and the teachers who said that they would normally have probably lost some kids who would have dropped out if not his hook that brings them back in.

So there is a lot of creative and innovative teaching practices take place incorporating the physical activity that our kids need and surprising them because they are learning at the same time.

So you are exactly right.

Mr. WAMP. I could just add, Mr. Chairman, that this is kind of a holistic approach to education. And the last thing we wanted to do was to pit science and math teachers against physical education instructors because we are all in this together.

And I think you have actually explained it very well in your question is that you can do all of the above without the mandates, and that is why we have been very flexible in terms of trying to find ways to incentivize this as opposed to mandating this.

And the last thing we want to do is to turn academia against this effort because, frankly, it will help them, I think, in a major way if we incorporate this physical activity piece in in terms of the kind of response they are getting from their students.

And we all know that. It is just figuring out exactly how to do it. And we very much appreciate your willingness to work with us on it.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

I know your committees are meeting.

Any of my colleagues here—Mr. Loeb sack, did you——

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Very briefly, I want to thank my colleagues for coming today. I got tired listening to Zach. I mean, it was wonderful.

I do want to thank the other panelists on the second panel for being here today.

I am someone who, 4 years ago in October, ran the Chicago Marathon. So far, it is the only marathon I have ever run. It may be the only one I ever run.

Not long after that, then, I began to run for this office. And so for the last 3 years, I have had a lot of excuses not to engage in regular physical activity, and it is taken its toll.

But I want to recognize Ric Keller in particular. You know, he was in Iraq with me in October. And those of you who have been overseas on these congressional delegations know how difficult it is to keep up a regimen when you are on one of those CoDels.

He did a fantastic job. I don't how much weight he has lost since then, but it has been significant. And I just want to thank him in particular for everything that he has done for this.

So thank you very much.

That is all.

Mr. KELLER. Well, thank you very much, Dave.

And you are right. I got up at 4:30 in the morning in the middle of a Middle Eastern country and, without any security, jogged down the streets to make sure I did my daily run. I got in a little trouble from my wife, again, afterwards for that. But thank you.

I have two questions, and I will direct them to both members and then give me your feedback on both of them.

The first thing is you guys are going into the public schools all the time and talk to the actual students. My question is do you get a sense from the kids that they want the P.E. and they want more activity?

The reason I ask that, because I was in the Hillcrest Elementary School, and this very creative P.E. teacher said I am going to create a new program; it is a runner's club. Every Friday, on your own time, we are going to get together and run. There is only 90 slots, and it filled up the first week.

Every Friday, 90 kids show up on their own time, from kindergarteners to fifth grade, and they all run a mile. And some it takes longer than others, but they were hungry for it. And I just want a sense of what you get from talking to kids.

And secondly, I notice that some states, I think, Illinois, have P.E. K through 12. Other states like Florida, we have it elementary and middle.

If you are faced with limited resources, do you have an opinion about where it is most important to put the P.E.? Is it elementary? Middle? High school? Or is it all of the above?

I will throw both of those to both of you all.

Mr. KIND. I will answer the second one first, Ric.

I think it is—the obvious answer is all the above.

What we saw with the recent study is how physical activity has just dropped off the cliff once kids reach their teen years. When they are younger, they are—I think, kids are naturally inclined and

they are wired to be active. We have got that going for ourselves already.

But it is easy for them to slip in the sedentary lifestyles. A lot of that is because of the culture around them and the environment that we are creating for them.

And now we are seeing a very disturbing trend of how it is just dropping off the cliff as soon as they hit 13, 14, 15 years old. And we are seeing that in high schools now where close to 45 percent of the high schools 10 years ago were offering an enriched P.E. course, today that is down to—what is it?—28 percent or so.

Just a tremendous drop in just offering physical education at the high school level.

But Zach is right. I mean, all of us have a role to play in this including the parents. As powerful as technology is, we have to have the ability to unplug our children, too, and get them away from the TV and the X Boxes, the computers and get them outside so they are running around and using their creative minds and innovation, too.

So I think we have got genetics working in our favor, but if we can create the right environment, we are going to be able to tap in to kids' natural inclination to be active and to be healthier and happier as a consequence.

Mr. WAMP. Congressman Keller, the unfortunate outcome is that at the primary and secondary level, less than 10 percent of the schools in the country right now meet an acceptable amount of physical activity in the classroom or in the school day.

That is way, way down.

And that has to turn around, and the states are taking the initiative. My home state has taken the initiative in the last 2 years of having a certain number of minutes for stretching and physical activity, and that is good that the states are leading.

But as we look at a federal framework, we need to have incentives built in as well.

Back to what the students are thinking, I have had both responses. I have had resistance, and I have had encouragement from the students and the teachers in a whole lot of schools.

But I got to say this because this is real important to getting this started. There is an axiom that is taught to our kids that is really, really unfortunate. You teach them "sticks and stones can break your bones but words will never hurt you," and nothing could be further than the truth.

And I tell young people everywhere I go never use the F word, ever, ever. If a child is larger than you, encourage them to adjust the dial. The dial needs to be set no matter how God made you, big, small, wide, thin. Adjust the dial and encourage every child to take two steps in the right direction. For some, it may literally be a short walk. For others, it may be a marathon.

But it is an encouragement for every child. So it is so important that when we start this, we start it that every child—the concept of No Child Left Behind—every child can take steps in the right direction.

Congressman Keller, you understand this well yourself.

So for goodness sakes, the children need to encourage and lift each other up. Words can bring down nations let alone people. And

the wrong thing said is as painful and as unfortunate as the total opposite where the right word of encouragement can change a person's life.

That is how important this is, Mr. Chairman.

So we have got to get out there in the schools and say this is not about setting up these children; it is about everybody moving in a better direction. All ships—

[The statement of Mr. Wamp follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Zach Wamp, a Representative in Congress  
From the State of Tennessee**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify at this important hearing on improving physical education and the health of our nation's children.

Nearly six years ago, I founded the Congressional Fitness Caucus, which is a bipartisan group of more than eighty Members of Congress dedicated to increasing awareness about the danger of obesity and promoting the benefits of physical activity to overall health and wellness. I am proud to be here with Congressman Ron Kind, co-chair of the Congressional Fitness Caucus, to advocate for these vital causes.

It was Thomas Jefferson that said, "A child who is not physically well cannot learn." His words could not be more true today, as childhood obesity in the United States reaches epidemic proportions, jeopardizing not only the health of our kids, but also their academic development.

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2010, 20 percent of children in the United States will be obese. A decline in physical activity has been a significant factor in the unprecedented rise in childhood obesity. A troubling consequence of obesity is the growing number of children experiencing illnesses and other health problems, such as Type II diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, respiratory problems, and some cancers.

The rise in obesity-related health conditions also has high economic costs and has greatly increased health care spending. Our nation is already spending nearly \$100 billion a year on obesity related health care costs. If we don't change our lifestyles, our Medicare and Medicaid systems will be overwhelmed. The most effective and practical way to combat rising healthcare costs is for people to get healthy by engaging in physical activity.

Despite these staggering social and economic costs, many schools are cutting back on physical education and health education programs because of budgetary concerns and the demand for stronger academic standards in math, reading, and science. In fact, between 1991 and 2003, enrollment of high school students in daily physical education classes decreased from 42 percent to 28 percent.

In addition to reducing childhood obesity, many studies have shown that regular physical activity strengthens academic performance and improves overall physical and emotional health of children and teens. The research is complete and, despite the fact that our society is overmedicating our children in many ways, the most effective anti-depressant in the history of the world is sweat! We must work to become a nation that exercises more because the human body was made to move. The more children we can encourage to have a regime of physical activity in their lives and take better care of themselves, the better off we will be as a society.

By the fourth grade, every child should know there are adverse consequences to a sedentary lifestyle. In doing so, we will also see the benefits in their math and reading test scores, get to the cause of the obesity epidemic, and encourage children to lead a healthy life.

In order to strengthen physical education in our nation's schools and address the childhood obesity epidemic, I am an original cosponsor of the Fitness Integrated with Teaching (FIT) Kids Act, H.R. 3257. This bill would engage parents and the public by asking all schools, districts, and states to report on students' physical activity, and would help faculty and staff learn new ways to promote kids' healthy lifestyles and physical activity through professional development opportunities. The bill would also authorize a study and pilot program to support effective ways to combat childhood obesity and improve healthy living and physical activity for all children.

The FIT Kids Act is a bipartisan bill and has the support of more than forty combined health, education, and physical activity organizations. This legislation is critical to strengthen physical education, which will improve academic performance and provide students with the physical activity and education to lead healthy lifestyles.

By taking action and important steps to increase physical activity and reduce obesity amongst our youth, we can improve academic performance, decrease medical costs, and save lives.

Thank you again for your dedication and support of the cause of improving the health of our children and I look forward to working with you as we move forward to improve physical education in our nation's schools.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you for your passion, for your support of the legislation, for your testimony this morning. [Applause.]

We will now go to our second panel. If they would come forward and take their seats, please. I will take a moment to introduce the panel to the committee.

First is Richard Simmons, who needs little introduction, but is a national leading fitness expert and advocate who has helped millions of overweight men and women lose close to 3 million pounds by adopting sensible, balanced eating programs and exercise regimens that are energetic, fun, and motivating.

Mr. SIMMONS has prevailed over his own weight problems as a child and has helped tailor fitness workouts for all Americans including the physically challenged and older Americans.

Much of the nation has been on hurricane watch for where Hurricane Dolly was going. We have been hearing that Richard is coming, Richard is coming, Richard is coming. And here he is.

Our next witness will be Dr. Russell Pate, who is the associate vice president for health sciences and professor at the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina.

Dr. Pate is an expert in health implications of physical activity and youth physical activity. Dr. Pate currently serves on the Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Lori Rose Benson is the director of Office of Fitness and Health Education with the New York City Department of Education. Ms. Benson has spearheaded and introduced a fitness gram, the city's first health-related fitness curriculum and web-based application that allows for the collection of health-related fitness assessment data on all 1.1 million public school students in the city.

Ms. BENSON has also helped develop an innovative citywide middle school reports and fitness programs that has grown into a thousand programs in more than 200 middle schools.

Robert—you are going to introduce Robert, right? Congressman Keller is going to make the next introduction of Mr. Keiser.

Mr. KELLER. Well, thank you, Chairman Miller.

I appreciate the opportunity to introduce our next witness from my home state. Robert recently graduated from the Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and will be a freshman at George Washington University this fall majoring in political science.

He has been successful both as a student as an athlete. Personal experiences have reinforced Robert's strong interest and belief in public service and government. From a child who struggled with his weight to a determined community advocate, paving the way to a better future for you, Robert is helping others achieve their goals and dreams through legislative and community advocacy.

In 2007, Robert founded Florida's first Legislative Advisory Teen Council under the Broward Days Organization. In June of 2007, as

a result of Robert's leadership of the teen council, he was appointed by Governor Charlie Crist to serve as the only youth member of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness.

Robert has testified before the Florida Legislature. He is now testifying before Congress. And I wouldn't be surprised if it is not too long before he is on the other side of this panel asking some questions.

We are pleased to have you with us, Robert, and look forward to your testimony.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you for being here, and I would also add that he is, I think, the third generation in his family that has been deeply involved in the education of young people in this country.

Tim Brown is a former Oakland Raider wide receiver. He is a nine-time NFL pro-bowler and ranks second in all-time receiving yards and third in all-time receptions. At the University of Notre Dame, he received the Heisman Trophy. And among his many contributions off the field, he is the national chair of Athletes and Entertainers for Kids, an organization that has helped over 5 million children and teens through mentoring and re-education programs.

And I would say aside, as a personal note, he has been before this committee before, but he is on the receiving end of so many requests for his time, his expertise, his fame, his reputation to help kids, and he never says no.

He is just a remarkable, remarkable athlete and a remarkable citizen of our community. And thank you once again for responding to the call to participate.

Welcome to all of the witnesses.

Richard, you are more comfortable standing. If you are more comfortable, I would be glad to relinquish this seat to you. You are welcome to come up here.

Whatever—

[Laughter.]

You are out, Richard. [Laughter.]

Let me say to the panelists, when you begin speaking, a green light will go on in the small monitors in front of you. We allow 5 minutes for your testimony, but we want you to be able to complete your thoughts in a coherent fashion.

An orange light will go on when you have 1 minute remaining, and that is an indication that you can begin wrapping up your testimony.

And we look forward to your testimony.

And, again, Richard, thank you very much for joining the committee. And thank you for all of the time you have spent to try to get people to understand and to participate in avoiding all of the detrimental health effects of obesity and lack of conditioning.

Welcome to the committee.

#### **STATEMENT OF RICHARD SIMMONS, FITNESS EXPERT AND ADVOCATE**

Mr. SIMMONS. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Richard Simmons, and I never took a P.E. class in my life.

I was overweight. I was short. I was lethargic.

It wasn't on before? Can I start over? [Laughter.]

Chairman MILLER. Take two. [Laughter.]

Mr. SIMMONS. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Richard Simmons, and I never took a P.E. class in my life.

I was overweight, a little lethargic, a little short.

At St. Louis Cathedral School in New Orleans, it was all sports. And I was not a jock. I spent my elementary school, my high school, and my college sitting on the benches watching everyone play sports.

And to get back at them, while they were playing sports, I ate their lunch. [Laughter.]

I was 268 pounds. I tried a lot of ways to lose weight, including taking laxatives, throwing up, starving, because I never took P.E. I was 23 years old. When I took my first exercise class, I was bitten by the sweat bug.

Twenty-five years ago, I opened up—excuse me—36 years ago, I opened my exercise studio up in Los Angeles, and there I began my pilgrimage to help people overweight, out of shape, 200 pounds, 400 pounds, 800 pounds.

And I have dedicated all these years to giving them some support and some self-esteem.

Five years ago, my mail shifted dramatically. I get thousands of e-mails a day. But when the No Child Left Behind Act came about, I got lots of letters from parents and children saying my kid is overweight. My kid is going to the doctors. My kid has high cholesterol.

So what I did was I went to shows like the “Today Show,” “Ellen,” “David Letterman,” “Howard Stern,” and I put a four-page questionnaire on Richard Simmons.com, and 60,000 people filled out that questionnaire.

And I learned what was happening in the schools in the United States of America.

I took a trip to Washington to meet Congressman Wamp and Congressman Kind. I told them my ideas. I began another campaign on my Web site asking people to write their congressmen and presidential candidates in order to let everyone know how important this is.

And here I stand with a vision today.

Everyone is not a jock. Everyone cannot play sports. Everyone cannot run. But everyone can be fit. It is not important if you are a jock. It is important that you have your health.

And your children right now do not have it.

I have a vision.

I know of a very economical way to bring fitness to every child in every school in the United States of America. There are hundreds of thousands of certified fitness instructors who travel around and teach classes. I want to head and be part of this committee to train teachers to go into the school system and teach the three things that we all need.

We all need cardio. We all need strength training. And we all need stretching. Every school that I have been in, I put the kids’ music on. I get them going. They feel great.

And as Congressman Wamp and Congressman Kind said, when you are feeling great about yourself, when you have self-esteem and self-respect for yourself, there is nothing you can’t do.

I am not 268 pounds any more, and I am still not a jock. But I am fit. And I have dedicated my life to this. And I am hoping that the committee today will know there is no other way to do this. Our children will get more sick.

And there is a statistic that says our children today will not live as long as their parents. What have we done? What have we done to the kids of the United States of America?

This is wrong.

And I will dedicate the rest of my life and, Chairperson George Miller, I just may run for office to help this really get through and not have one kid feel lousy about himself because he can't throw a ball.

One kid who cannot run a mile, he cannot be made fun of. We have to support him and what he can do.

Every child can dance. Every child can dance. I have seen it.

I travel 200 days a year, and I see what happens when the music goes on—their music, not mine—when the music goes on, they feel so good about themselves they go back in that school room and they learn.

I do not want any child in America to have my childhood because it was taken away from me because I just wasn't good enough. Well, I am good enough now, and I have devoted—I am 60 years old now. And I have devoted my life to this, and I will devote my life to this to the day I die.

And I hope that one day every kid gets to feel the self-esteem and self-respect that I have.

God bless you all, and God bless the children of America.

Thank you very much. [Applause.]

[The statement of Mr. Simmons follows:]

#### **Prepared Statement of Richard Simmons, ASK America**

##### *1. History*

My own personal "exercise" life story, a summary of how a child who loathed exercise transformed in to a fitness legend.

##### *2. A "Shift" in Mail*

Five years ago, I began to notice a real change in the mail I was receiving. More and more letters were coming from parents concerned with their child's weight, state of health and most unusual, their stress levels. There were even letters from children themselves. The letters primarily voiced concerns over the lack of, or dramatic cuts in PE classes as a result of the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Law. The parents were now seeing their children gaining weight, becoming diabetic, showing signs of high blood pressure, anxiety and depression \* \* \* children!

##### *3. Questionnaire*

I decided to investigate what was happening for myself. My team and I created a survey to literally "Ask America" all about the state of Physical Education in their neighborhoods. I hit the airways and asked America to tell me their story.

—60,000 people answered the call, and they had a lot to say

—94% of survey respondents believed that PE should be a required subject at ALL levels of Education.

—Almost 40% of survey respondents reported their children as having PE Class ONE time per week OR LESS.

—90% of survey respondents reported feeling that PE would be more EFFECTIVE and ENJOYABLE if it included all children, regardless of athletic ability, in a non-competitive atmosphere.

##### *4. Trip to Washington*

In February of 2007, Congressman Zach Wamp and Congressman Ron Kind invited me to Washington D.C. We discussed how I could use my public voice to help

bring these issues to the public's and Leaders' attention. I set to work on advocating for a PE Bill that ultimately became the Fit Kids Act.

##### *5. Letter Writing Campaign*

After my trip to Washington, I again asked my friends in the media for help. I did as many media appearances as I could, asking everyone to write to their Congressmen, Senators, and even the Presidential Candidates, in support of Fit Kids and primarily PE.

The response was overwhelming. People telling people, telling people all about our "crusade". Everywhere I went, in airports, in shopping malls, on the street, people were stopping and thanking me for doing something for our kids, for the future.

##### *6. Vision*

I certainly don't have all the answers to the tough questions, but I'm not empty-handed either. I come today with a vision.

I am well aware that many of our teachers are working under stressful conditions. I am also aware that time and funding are serious issues that must be addressed to solve this PE crisis.

However, I know that fit kids are healthier and appear to learn better.

Therefore, I would like to propose utilizing the talents of the community, specifically certified fitness instructors, to work under the direct supervision of certified PE Teachers, so as to alleviate some of this stress.

Congressmen, and Congresswomen, thank you for inviting me here today and listening. It breaks my heart that we presently have a generation of children, in real danger of not living as long as their parents. You have the power to prevent this from happening. I believe that it doesn't have to.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.  
Dr. Pate?

#### **STATEMENT OF RUSSELL PATE, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR HEALTH SCIENCES AND PROFESSOR, ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Mr. PATE. Committee, I have followed some tough acts in my day, but this is a tough one.

My name is Russ Pate, and I am an exercise physiologist at the University of South Carolina.

I am also a volunteer for the American Heart Association. I have authored several American Heart Association scientific statements, and I am currently on the Department of Health and Human Services Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee having been nominated to serve in that capacity by the American Heart.

Today, I thank you very much for inviting me to testify on the benefits of physical education and health education for our nation's children. And I am thrilled, absolutely thrilled to be here today. And I hope that my remarks will help in the consideration of innovative ways to promote physical activity within our nation's schools and, ultimately, to prevent childhood obesity.

The childhood obesity crisis in the United States cannot be overstated. As others have mentioned this morning, more than 9 million American children and adolescents are overweight and the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2010, one in five children in the U.S. will be obese.

Unfortunately, it is well documented that overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. Obesity and physical inactivity are major risk factors for cardiovascular disease, some cancers, Type 2 diabetes, and early death.

We are already seeing diseases like Type 2 diabetes, which we used to refer to as adult onset diabetes, and elevated cholesterol in

children that in previous generations were observed only in older persons. The epidemic is so severe that some experts have predicted that this generation of America's children may be the first to have shorter life spans than their parents. And I will say that that is a terribly depressing thought.

The decline in physical activity, in combination with adverse dietary trends is one of the most significant contributors to obesity and overweight among our children and youth.

Recent findings from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development confirm that physical activity levels decline as children approach adolescence, and I will add that my own research group recently observed a large national sample of middle school girls using objective measurements of physical activity, and found that on average those girls were engaged in about 22 to 23 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity today, and almost none of them met a 60-minute target for daily physical activity.

The Texas Education Agency also recently reported that as children in Texas moved from elementary to high school, their physical levels dropped substantially.

The data clearly show that many kids are living an inactive lifestyle, spending more time in front of the computer and TV, that their neighborhoods are less walkable, that they have less down time to pursue fitness-related activities, and that physical education and physical activity opportunities in the schools are reduced.

You all recognize that the world that our children are growing up in today is just very different than the world we grew up in with regard to opportunities and requirements for physical activity.

To stem the rise in obesity, it is imperative that children and youth become physically active during the school day. Children are to get 60 minutes of physical activity daily. It is hard to imagine how they will meet that target if they are not physically active at a reasonable level during the school day.

Children and youth spend more time in school than any other setting except their homes. In the past, schools played a central role in providing physical activity. P.E. has been an institution in American schools since the late 1800s, and school sports have been a growing component of the educational enterprise since the early 1900s.

In addition, children have engaged in physical activity during recess breaks during the school day and by walking or riding bikes to and from school.

The dietary guidelines for Americans—the American Heart Association recommends that children engage in physical activity for at least 1 hour on most days of the week. And a recently-released report of the Department of Health and Human Services Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee concluded that participation in 60 minutes of physical activity per day provides very important health benefits to children and adolescents.

The AHA has been joined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Association for Sports and Physical Education, and a number of other leading authorities in recommending that elementary school students receive 150 minutes of physical

education per week and that middle and high school students receive 225 minutes per week.

However, the most recent school health policies and programs study, recent in 2006, found that only 3.8 percent of elementary, 7.9 percent of middle, and 2.1 percent of high schools are meeting those standards.

More than one in five schools do not require students to take physical education at all. Additionally, only 45 percent of schools offer opportunities for students to participate in intramural activities or physical activity clubs.

Only one-third of trips to school under one mile in distance and less than 3 percent of trips under two miles in distance are made by walking or biking.

Even recess has been reduced or eliminated in some elementary schools. Reducing physical education and physical activity during the school day may actually undermine a school's ability to meet academic standards.

A new field of research is providing very encouraging evidence that physical activity may help with brain function and development. And other recent studies have found a positive correlation between aerobic fitness and academic performance.

Also, it is true that normal weight children have lower rates of school absenteeism than overweight kids.

Schools are uniquely positioned to address childhood obesity and should be encouraged to ensure that kids are active during the school day. This is why the American Heart Association supports the Fit Kids Act.

It is, in my view, critical that our schools be held accountable for delivery of high-quality physical education programs and for provision of healthy school environments.

Further, it is critical that parents be informed regarding the status of their children's schools in these important areas. I believe the Fit Kids Act will help ensure that those outcomes result.

I thank you very much again for inviting me to testify today. When the time comes, I will be delighted to respond to questions.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Pate follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dr. Russell Pate, Associate Vice President for Health Sciences, Professor, Department of Exercise Science, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon and Members of the Committee on Education and Labor, my name is Russell Pate and I am an exercise physiologist at the University of South Carolina. My research focuses on physical activity and physical fitness in children, and the health implications of physical activity. I am also a volunteer for the American Heart Association (AHA), I have authored several AHA scientific statements and I am currently on the Department of Health and Human Services' Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee having been nominated by the AHA. I want to thank you for inviting me to testify before the Committee today on "The Benefits of Physical Education and Health Education for Our Nation's Children" and I hope that my remarks will help in the consideration of new and innovative ways to address childhood obesity and physical activity within our nation's schools.

*The childhood obesity epidemic and physical inactivity*

The childhood obesity crisis in the United States cannot be overstated. More than 9 million American children and adolescents are overweight and the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2010 one in five children in the U.S.

will be obese.<sup>1,2</sup> Unfortunately, overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.<sup>3</sup> Although recent data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey showed that U.S. childhood obesity rates may be leveling off, it is still alarming that nearly 32 percent of children are considered overweight, nearly 16 percent are considered obese, and approximately 11 percent are considered extremely obese.<sup>4</sup> It is premature to celebrate a possible plateau since we need further confirmation of these data. Moreover, childhood obesity rates remain more than triple the rates recorded in the 1960s and 1970s, and are of particular concern among children in racial and ethnic minorities.<sup>5</sup>

Obesity is not just about fat and appearance. It is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and early death. We are already seeing diseases like diabetes and high cholesterol in children that in previous generations were only observed in adults. The epidemic is so severe that some experts predict that this generation of America's children may be the first to have shorter lives than their parents. We must not—we cannot let that happen. We owe it to our children to take action.

The decline in physical activity, in combination with adverse dietary trends, is one of the most significant contributors to obesity among our children and youth. Recent findings from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development confirmed that physical activity levels decline as children approach adolescence. At the age of 9, children engaged in moderate-vigorous physical activity approximately 3 hours per day on both weekends and weekdays but, by age 15, they were only engaging in moderate-vigorous physical activity for 49 minutes on week days and 35 minutes on weekend days.<sup>6</sup>

The Texas Education Agency also recently reported that as children in Texas moved from elementary to high school, their fitness levels slipped significantly. Texas used data collected by Fitnessgram assessments in the state's schools. Fitnessgram is a youth fitness testing protocol and data were aggregated from all Texas school districts on students' body mass, aerobic capacity, strength, endurance and flexibility. The report found that 32 percent of third-grade girls and 28 percent of third-grade boys reached the "Healthy Fitness Zone," meaning that they exhibited competency across all six fitness tests. By seventh grade, the percentage of students achieving the healthy zone fell to 21 percent of girls and 17 percent of boys; it slipped even further by 12th grade to just 8 percent of girls and 9 percent of boys.<sup>7</sup> The data clearly show that many kids are living a sedentary lifestyle as they spend more time in front of computer, television, and other screens, their neighborhoods are less walkable, they have less "down time" to pursue fitness-related activities, and physical education and physical activity opportunities are reduced in our nation's schools.

#### *School leadership in promoting physical activity*

Children and youth spend more time in schools than any other setting except their homes. To stem the rise in obesity, it is imperative that children and youth become physically active during the school day. In the past, schools played a central role in providing physical activity. Physical education (PE) has been an institution in American schools since the late 1800s, and school sports have been a growing component of the educational enterprise since the early 1900s. In addition, students engaged in physical activity during recess breaks in the school day and by walking or riding bicycles to and from school.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the AHA recommend that children engage in physical activity for at least an hour most days of the week. The AHA is joined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Association for Sports and Physical Education and other leading authorities in recommending that elementary school students receive 150 minutes of PE per week and that middle and high school students receive 225 minutes per week. Yet the most recent School Health Policies and Programs Study (2006) found that only 3.8 percent of elementary, 7.9 percent of middle, and 2.1 percent of high schools are meeting this standard. More than one in five schools do not require students to take any physical education at all.

The decline in physical education in schools over the last few decades has been precipitous. Additionally, only 45% of schools offered opportunities for students to participate in intramural activities or physical activity clubs.<sup>8</sup> Only one third of trips to school under one mile, and less than three percent of trips under two miles are made by walking or biking. Even recess has been reduced or eliminated in some elementary schools.<sup>9</sup>

The reduction in physical education in schools has occurred for a variety of reasons, including budget constraints, lack of availability of outdoor space and adequate facilities, and an increased emphasis on meeting academic objectives such as

the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Instructional time for physical education as part of total instructional time during the school day has dropped by 35% since NCLB enactment, although there are likely many reasons for the decline.<sup>10</sup> But ironically, reducing physical education and physical activity during the school day may actually undermine a school's ability to meet academic standards. A new field of research is providing encouraging evidence that physical activity may help with brain function and activity, and other recent studies have found a positive correlation between aerobic fitness and academic performance.<sup>11,12,13</sup> Normal-weight children also have lower rates of school absenteeism than obese children and may also have reduced rates of tobacco use, insomnia, depression, and anxiety.<sup>14</sup>

There are many opportunities—in addition to the traditional PE curriculum—for schools to encourage students to be active before, during and after school. For example, schools can promote walking and biking to and from school; link to community outdoor recreational opportunities, integrate technology into physical activity opportunities, partner with families to promote physical activity at home, provide recess for young children; and promote the creation of clubs, intramural sports, and interscholastic sports programs that meet the physical activity needs and interests of all students. Some schools are even allowing students to burn off calories in the classroom using innovative programs that have been designed to incorporate physical activity into the delivery of the academic curriculum.

*The American Heart Association supports the FIT Kids Act*

Although parents, community agencies and healthcare providers share the responsibility for ensuring that young people are physically active, schools are uniquely positioned to address this critical public health concern. In order for children to obtain adequate amounts of physical activity, schools must be more aggressive in providing these opportunities. However, we also know that schools face multiple challenges, and there is no "one size fits all" solution. That's why the AHA, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, the Afterschool Alliance, Blue Cross Blue Shield, First Focus, and many other organizations support the Fitness Integrated into Teaching Kids Act, or FIT Kids Act. This important legislation, which has been introduced in the House by Representatives Ron Kind, Zach Wamp and Jay Inslee and by Senator Harkin in the Senate, would require schools to report to parents on the quantity and quality of physical education that children receive during the school year, as part of the reporting that is currently required on other elements of school performance.

Information is power. When parents know how active their children are during the school day, they can use that information to determine whether they need to work more closely with their schools to increase physical education or recess; support the development of after-school programs that provide opportunities for physical activity; or adjust their own children's schedule outside of school to incorporate more time for exercise and play. Each school and community can create a physical activity blueprint for success to keep their children—our children—healthy and fit for life.

The legislation also has other provisions aimed at ensuring that children and parents can obtain the information and support they need to live a healthy life. It supports professional development to help all teachers convey this information effectively, and funds more research into effective ways to combat childhood obesity in the school environment.

I want to close by thanking you again for inviting me to testify before the Committee today and for the opportunity to voice the AHA's strong support for the FIT Kids Act. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you. [Applause.]  
Ms. Benson?

**STATEMENT OF LORI ROSE BENSON, DIRECTOR OF FITNESS  
AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION, NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

Ms. BENSON. Good morning, Chairman Miller and members of the Committee on Education and Labor.

I am Lori Rose Benson. I am the director of fitness and health education for the New York City Department of Education.

From my experience in helping meet the fitness and health challenges of the 1.1 million students in New York City, I have three key messages that I hope will inform your thinking and your work.

First, there is no magic formula for ending this national childhood obesity epidemic, but we must address this issue immediately, vigorously, and comprehensively.

Second, schools can absolutely play an important role in shaping students' fitness, but that is not the only place. We have family refrigerators that are packed are high-caloric foods. We have well-worn couches opposite TVs. And we have a lack of community fitness opportunities, a lack of community facilities for families to engage in quality physical activity together.

Third, we must create and nurture a culture of fitness in schools that can include but definitely is not limited to athletics and traditional sports. And it must—it must have clear accountability standards tied to appropriate assessments.

Last week, my bosses, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, appeared before this committee to highlight the successes of New York City's Children First Reforms.

The Children First Reform is focused on closing our city's student achievement gap, as you heard, but they also tackle the tough issues on physical education and its relationship to student health and academic performance. Under the mayor and chancellor's leadership, we are making great strides towards quality fitness and health education for every student, male or female, able-bodied or physically challenged, sports fanatic or couch potato.

My office is helping schools provide students with the knowledge, skills, and increased opportunities for moderate to vigorous physical activity that are essential for fitness.

While there is no silver bullet, there are programs and strategies that can be part of the solution. National health standards tell us that children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.

And I encourage schools to look at not only the required physical education class time but opportunities before and after the school day and physical activity opportunities within the classroom environment.

Movement in classrooms is an exciting development in school fitness. In New York City, we have trained 1200 classroom teachers from 80 elementary schools using the Nike "Let Me Play" curriculum.

And this is where regular classroom teachers are leading their students in fitness activities that compliment but do not supplant core academic instruction. You know, we are showing teachers that physical activity helps students get ready to learn but, more importantly or as important, it also teaches that life-long fitness habits are essential for good health.

We also introduced the "Physical Best" curriculum. That is a program by NASPE, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, for our physical education classes.

And this is a shift. This is a shifting towards health-related fitness. It is really about empowering students to take responsibility for their own fitness levels so that they can try lots of different activities that they can enjoy and then experience beyond the walls of the classroom, beyond the walls of the school environment.

We support that curriculum with hundreds of free professional development opportunities for teachers and school administrators because creating school buy-in, you know, creating this culture of fitness is way beyond what we think of as a traditional gym class. And I don't use that word lightly.

Just as there is no magic formula for attacking childhood obesity, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach for quality physical education. My team works with almost 1500 schools to solve problems with facilities, scheduling, and staffing.

As this committee and the House considers setting new national standards for minutes of physical education, I encourage you to also consider that increasing minutes of instruction by itself does not necessarily increase the quality of physical education or the amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

Here is another New York City example. We introduced the CHAMPS Middle School Sport and Fitness Program. And CHAMPS does not stand for champion. It stands for cooperative, healthy, active, motivated, positive students.

So instead of the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, you know, it is really about offering a range of traditional and non-traditional activities for students.

There are now a thousand activities in 200 middle schools before and after the school day. You know, you like basketball, track and field, baseball, football? There is a program for you. If you are not interested in that, we have dance, crew, cricket, double Dutch, yoga. We have got them all.

And so besides creating these before or after opportunities to complement quality physical education programs, school districts

also need to think about how they can collaborate and synergize with their local public health departments.

Under Mayor Bloomberg's leadership in New York City, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have been finding new ways to collaborate, work together, and pool resources so that we can, together, leverage change in health and fitness habits.

One of our most successful collaborations will soon generate national attention. The last school year, 640,000 students received New York City Fitness Gram reports in one of nine home languages.

We took the decades of research from the Cooper Institute of Aerobic Research and Human Kinetics and adapted that to meet the needs of our students. This result is New York City Fitness Gram, which measures areas of health-related fitness, including aerobic fitness, muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition.

You know, so this data from these student reports now is shared with our Department of Health, which has produced the largest longitudinal web-based database of student fitness levels. We are looking at any information to see how fitness levels influence students' core academic achievement, and we continue to tailor our professional development opportunities so that our teachers know that they can help influence student fitness levels.

This year, Chancellor Klein included the completion of New York City Fitness Gram reports as one of the criteria used in the principal's annual job performance reviews as part of his accountability initiative.

We are now not only talking the talk, but we are absolutely walking walk when it comes to fitness education.

In closing, I want to echo something else that the mayor and chancellor stressed last week. New York City is on the right track when it comes to physical education. Excellence in achievement are the cornerstones of our approach, but we have a lot of work to do ahead of us.

The fact remains that 53 percent of our students are not at a healthy weight, and the immediate and long-term personal and social consequences of that fact are devastating in terms of health care costs and employment and educational opportunities for our students.

As you consider legislation, I encourage you to look at students, look at schools rather, as a lever for change in fitness. And let me leave you today with an interesting question——

Chairman MILLER. You are going to leave us right now if you——

Ms. BENSON. Last question, and something that you may want to talk with your colleagues, family, and friends about.

When you were in school, you know, did you like gym class? Why or why not?

And my answer is I am a native New Yorker. I am a proud public school graduate. I hated gym class.

I felt fat. I felt awkward and unsuccessful. I hated team sports, and that is all there was.

You know, what we need to do is be——

Chairman MILLER. You are going to have to wrap up because we have other witnesses, and I don't want to lose my committee.

Ms. BENSON. Yes. My last——

Chairman MILLER. No. That was your question.

Ms. BENSON. Okay.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Keiser?

Thank you very much.

Ms. BENSON. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

[The statement of Ms. Benson follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Lori Rose Benson, Director, Office of Fitness and Health Education, New York City Department of Education**

Good morning Chairman Miller and members of the Committee on Education and Labor.

I am Lori Rose Benson, Director of the Office of Fitness and Health Education for the New York City Department of Education. From my experience in helping to meet the fitness and health challenges of New York City's 1.1 million students, I have three key messages that I hope inform your thinking and your work:

- First, there is no magic formula for ending the national childhood obesity epidemic \* \* \* but we must address this issue immediately, vigorously, and comprehensively.

- Second, schools can play an important role in improving student fitness levels, in a culture that includes family refrigerators stocked with high calorie foods \* \* \* well-worn couches that sit opposite TVs \* \* \* and lack of community opportunities and facilities for family fitness activities.

- Third, we must create and nurture a culture of fitness in schools that includes \* \* \* but is never limited to \* \* \* athletics and traditional sports with clear accountability standards tied to appropriate assessments.

Last week my bosses, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein appeared before this committee to highlight the successes of New York City's Children First education reforms. The Children First reforms focus on closing our city's student achievement gap, as you heard, but they also tackle tough issues surrounding physical education and its relationship to student health and academic performance.

Under the Mayor and Chancellor's leadership we are making great strides toward providing quality fitness and health instruction for every student \* \* \* male or female, able-bodied or physically challenged, sports fanatics or couch potatoes. My office is helping schools provide students with the knowledge, skills, and increased opportunities for moderate to vigorous physical activity that are essential for fitness.

While there is no silver bullet, there are programs and strategies that can be part of the solution.

National health standards tell us that children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity everyday. I encourage schools to look not only at required physical education classes, but also at before and after school opportunities \* \* \* and possibilities of physical activity in classrooms.

Movement in classrooms is an exciting development in school fitness. In New York City we have trained more than 1,200 teachers in 80 elementary schools using the Nike "Let Me Play" curriculum in classrooms. Regular classroom teachers are leading their students in fitness activities that complement, not supplant, teaching in core academic subjects. We're showing teachers that including activity in the regular classroom day gets students "ready to learn" and also teaches that lifelong fitness habits are essential for good health.

We also introduced the Physical Best curriculum, a program of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, for physical education classes. This is a health-related fitness education program for kindergarten through 12th grade. The emphasis is on empowering students to develop the knowledge and skills to take responsibility for their own personal fitness \* \* \* to discover which physical activities they like best and are most likely to do on their own.

We support that curriculum with hundreds of free year-round professional development opportunities for administrators and teachers. Creating school buy-in for fitness requires creating a culture of healthy fitness that goes beyond traditional ideas of "gym class."

Just as there is no magic formula for attacking childhood obesity, there is also no one-size-fits-all formula for schools delivering physical education. My team works with almost 1,500 schools to solve problems with facilities, scheduling, and staffing.

As this Committee and the House consider setting new national standards for minutes of physical education, I encourage you to also consider that increasing minutes of instruction by itself does not necessarily create a quality program or more minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

Here's another New York City example. We created the first ever city-wide middle school sport and fitness program called C.H.A.M.P.S. which stands for Cooperative Healthy Active Motivated Positive Students.

Instead of the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, C.H.A.M.P.S. offers students a range of 1,000 traditional and non-traditional sports and fitness programs in 200 middle schools. If you like baseball, basketball, or track and field, we've got a program for you. Not interested? What about dance, crew, double dutch, or yoga? We've got those, too.

School districts also need to consider how they can effectively interact with local public health agencies to inform families about requirements for healthy fitness. Under Mayor Bloomberg's leadership in New York City, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene are collaborating in new ways to pool resources and work together to leverage changes in health and fitness habits.

One of our most successful collaborations will soon generate national attention. We took decades of research from the Cooper Institute of Aerobic Research and Human Kinetics and adapted it to the needs of our students. The result is NYC FITNESSGRAM, which measures components of health-related fitness in our students: their aerobic capacity, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Last year about 640,000 public school students in all grades took home NYC FITNESSGRAM reports in one of nine home languages.

The data from these student reports is shared with the Department of Health, which is creating the country's largest longitudinal database of student fitness. We are beginning to look at how fitness levels influence student's core academic achievement. We continue to tailor our professional development to demonstrate for teachers how their instruction bolsters student fitness levels.

This year Chancellor Klein included the completion of NYC FITNESSGRAM reports as one of the criteria used in principals' annual job performance reviews as part of his accountability initiative. We are now not only "talking the talk, we are also walking the walk" when it comes to fitness education.

In closing I want to echo something else the Mayor and Chancellor stressed last week. New York City is on the right track when it comes to physical education, excellence and achievement are the cornerstones of our approach, but we have a lot of work ahead of us. The fact remains that only 53 percent of students are at a healthy weight. The immediate and long-term personal and social consequences of that fact are devastating in terms of health care costs, and educational and employment opportunities for our students.

As you consider legislation, I encourage you to look at schools as a tool and lever for changes in fitness. Let me leave you today with an interesting question. You might also ask your colleagues, family and friends. .

The question is: "When you were in school did you like gym class? Why—or why not?"

Here's my answer: "I am a native New Yorker and a proud graduate of public schools. But I hated gym class. I felt fat, awkward, and unsuccessful. I hated team sports, and that's all there was to do."

The United States must create future generations who answer this way: "Physical education changed my life. I found activities that I was at good at \* \* \* things that I enjoyed doing. Teachers showed me how those activities contributed to good health, and that's still an important part of my life. My teachers taught me and now I teach my children."

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today, and I would welcome your questions today or at any time in the future.

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**STATEMENT OF ROBERT M. KEISER, STUDENT ADVISOR TO  
GOV. CHARLIE CRIST, COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS**

Mr. KEISER. Can you hear me? Okay. Good.

Good morning Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Keller, and members of the Education and Labor Committee. My name is Robert Keiser, and I am from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Can you hear me? I am good?

I would like to thank you for the honor and privilege of testifying before you today.

I am here to address a growing epidemic of childhood obesity in the United States and to shed some light on my personal struggle with obesity.

According to the Center for Disease Control, a staggering 25.6 percent of Americans reported being obese in 2007. According to the American Heart Association, in 2004, over 9 million children and adolescents ages 6 to 19 were considered overweight.

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2010, 20 percent of the children in the United States will be obese. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults.

The experts here today can describe the various risks and expenditures associated with obesity. I am here today because I believe by sharing my own personal story, I may help you find ways to help other children overcome their struggles with obesity.

As a child, I was overweight. This is what I looked like when I was 8 years old. It is a little embarrassing, but, you know—I had limited physical education classes in elementary school.

Like so many of America's youth, I spent countless hours in my room playing video games and eating junk food even though my parents provided healthy food choices for me. Even though I was an active kid—I played many sports—however, this physical activity was not sufficient to overcome the vicious cycle I was falling into.

One day, my mother contacted a local gym and asked me to enroll with her in weight training and fitness classes. Reluctantly, I agreed, and I credit her for encouraging me to take the first step in changing my life forever.

After years of video games and poor food choices, I began a weekly workout regimen. At first, I went to the gym two to three times a week. Then four to five times each week as I got more comfortable.

I began noticing small changes in my body, but I realized it was still not where I wanted to be. My trainer, Manny Mair, a former member of the United States Marine Corps and licensed fitness trainer, evolved into a second father figure for me. I made a personal commitment to take the steps necessary to lead a healthy lifestyle.

It is a decision that has positively affected every aspect of my life. I became involved in boxing and weight training which established a set regimen for my daily activities.

Manny also created a nutrition program for me that consisted of healthy choices. Through intense training and a commitment to eating healthy food, I lost over 30 pounds. This experience changed every aspect of my life for the better. Excuse me. I finally broke the vicious cycle.

During my freshman and sophomore years I hovered around a 3.5 GPA. I played football during middle school but my weight prevented me from playing during my freshman and sophomore years at Pine Crest because the conditioning was too hard and I didn't want to feel embarrassed or inadequate.

After losing the weight, I achieved my life-long dream in my senior year becoming a co-captain of the Pine Crest football team. I had more energy and I didn't feel tired all the time. And my GPA got as high as a 4.3. So a 3.5 to a 4.3.

More important than these accomplishments, I saw how losing weight had changed my life. My personal triumph over obesity changed how I viewed myself. It made me happier, more confident, and more successful at school. In fact, meeting this personal challenge head on has given me the confidence to speak to you today.

Having won my own battle, I wanted to help other kids overcome their struggles with obesity. I recognized that not all kids would be as fortunate as I was to have a personal trainer to turn to for help. So I established the Legislative Advisory Teen Council of Broward Days, comprised of public and private school teens united to address the many concerns of Florida's youth.

I learned that legislation had been introduced in Florida mandating 150 minutes of physical education in Florida schools grades K-5. So I led members of the teen council to Tallahassee to lobby the state's legislators in support of the bill.

I testified before the K-12 committee, sharing my personal struggle with obesity, much as I am doing now. The bill passed unanimously in the Florida House and Senate and was signed into law in May 2007.

Florida media and the American Heart Association became interested in my story and I realized that I was making a real difference. And, to top it all, I was appointed by Governor Crist as the only teen member of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness.

My personal story is one of overcoming the odds and being blessed by accomplishments. I was fortunate to have the love and support of my family, my trainer, and my friends—something not all teens have.

It is my dream that children and teens who struggle with obesity don't have to face this problem alone, and that they can overcome unhealthy lifestyle habits if they have support from schools, counselors, PE teachers, and others to do so.

I think it is critical that a legislative advisory teen council is created in every state that can champion the concerns of youth on this and other important issues. I am aware of states that have established these councils and their successes are well documented.

My second recommendation is that these councils have a coordinated mentoring program to assist teens and youth seeking to better their lives through physical fitness and healthy living. Learning how to be fit and healthy is an important first step in making a difference in shaping America's future.

Mr. Chairman, esteemed members of the committee, again, I want to thank you for this opportunity. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have. [Applause.]

[The statement of Mr. Keiser follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Robert Keiser, Student Advisor to Gov. Charlie Crist, Council on Physical Fitness**

Good Morning Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon and members of the Education and Labor Committee. My name is Robert Keiser and I'm from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I would like to thank you for the honor and privilege of testifying before you today.

I am here to address the growing epidemic of childhood obesity in the United States and to shed some light on my personal struggle with obesity.

According to the Center for Disease Control, a staggering 25.6% of Americans reported being obese in 2007. According to the American Heart Association, in 2004, over 9 million children and adolescents ages 6 to 19 were considered overweight. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2010, 20 percent of children in the U.S. will be obese. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults.

The experts here today can describe the various risks and expenditures associated with obesity. But I am here today because I believe that, by sharing my own personal story, I may help you find ways to help other children overcome their struggles with obesity.

As a child I was overweight. I did not have physical education classes in elementary school. Like so many of America's youth, I spent countless hours in my room playing video games and eating junk food, even though my parents provided healthy food choices. Even though I was an active child and was involved in many sports, this physical activity was not sufficient to overcome the vicious cycle I was falling into.

One day my mother contacted a local gym and asked me to enroll with her in weight training and fitness classes. Reluctantly I agreed and I credit her for encouraging me to take the first step in changing my life forever.

After years of video games and poor food choices, I began a weekly workout regimen. At first I went to the gym two to three times each week, increasing to four and five times a week as I got more comfortable. I began noticing small changes in my body, but I realized I was still not where I wanted to be.

My trainer, Manny Mair, a former member of the United States Marine Corps and licensed fitness trainer, evolved into a second father figure for me. I made a personal commitment to take the steps necessary to lead a healthy lifestyle. It is a decision that has positively affected every aspect of my life. I became involved in boxing and weight training which established a set regimen for my daily activities. Manny also created a nutrition program for me that consisted of healthy choices. Through intense training and a commitment to eating healthy food, I lost over 30 pounds.

This experience changed every aspect of my life for the better and I finally broke the vicious cycle. During my freshman and sophomore years I hovered around a 3.5 GPA. I played football during middle school but my weight prevented me from playing during my freshman and sophomore years at Pine Crest because the conditioning was too hard and I didn't want to feel embarrassed or inadequate. After losing the weight, I achieved my life-long dream in my junior and senior years when teammates chose me as co-captain of the Pine Crest Panthers football team. I had more energy and I didn't feel tired all the time. And my GPA increased to a high of 4.3.

More important than these accomplishments, I saw how losing weight had changed my life. My personal triumph over obesity changed how I viewed myself. It made me happier, and more confident and successful at school. In fact, meeting this personal challenge head on has given me the confidence to speak before you today.

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I learned that legislation had been introduced in Florida mandating 150 minutes of physical education in Florida schools grades K-5. So I led members of the teen council to Tallahassee to lobby the state's legislators in support of the bill. I testified before the K-12 committee, sharing my personal struggle with obesity, much as I am doing now. The bill passed unanimously in the Florida House and Senate and was signed into law in May 2007.

Florida media and the American Heart Association became interested in my story and I realized that I was making a real difference. And, to top it all, I was appointed by Governor Crist as the only teen member of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness.

My personal story is one of overcoming the odds and being blessed by accomplishments. I was fortunate to have the love and support of my family, my trainer, and my friends—something not all teens have. It is my dream that children and teens who struggle with obesity don't have to face this problem alone, and that they can overcome unhealthy lifestyle habits if they have support from schools, counselors, PE teachers, and others to do so.

I think it is critical that a legislative advisory teen council is created in every state that can champion the concerns of you on this and other important issues. I'm aware of states that have established these councils and their successes are well documented. My second recommendation is that these councils have a coordinated mentoring program to assist teens and youth seeking to better their lives through physical fitness and healthy living. Learning how to be fit and healthy is an important first step in making a difference and in shaping America's future.

Mr. Chairman, esteemed members of the committee, again I want to thank you for this opportunity. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.  
Tim?

**STATEMENT OF TIM BROWN, FORMER PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER AND NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, ATHLETES AND ENTERTAINERS FOR KIDS**

Mr. BROWN. Chairman Miller, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today.

When I was asked to be here, the first thing I thought about was my experience with the youth over the last 20 or so years. I have been involved in many football camps and went to many camps that we have in the Oakland area where I bring about 150 kids every summer who are fatherless young men.

And I have a mentor—camp with these kids trying to surround them with football, but the idea is to get them some mentors. What I have learned over the last 10 years is these kids are out of shape, and these are the jocks.

These are the kids that everybody thinks can go and do everything that you want them to do on the athletic field. But that is just not the case any more. We have found it necessary, over the last couple of years, to have an ambulance and paramedics at the facilities. And we have had to use those facilities, unfortunately, because kids are passing out.

Kids are overly dehydrated and cannot finish the activities that we are putting forth. And this is over a 2-hour period. This is not 8 hours. This is California we are talking about. So we are not talking about the heat of Texas or someplace like that.

But I find it very disturbing. And when you have the opportunity to sit down and talk with these kids, you ask them what are you doing. I mean, you know, what are you doing on a day-to-day basis as far as your activities.

And all you hear, well, I play Playstation. I am very good at the guitar game. I am very good at these things that have nothing to do with physical activity.

And the thing that discourages me the most is when I speak with the parents. And the parents think that it is great that these kids are—well, at least they are safe. At least they are at the house. At least I don't have to worry about them. When I leave the house, I don't have to worry about them in the streets getting in trouble or doing these things.

Well, what I try to tell the parents is it is very important that they get their kids out. The sedentary lifestyle that kids are living these days is very detrimental to their health.

And it was mentioned before, by a certain age, they should know what they are capable of doing. But that is—that is going to be instilled by your parents.

Now, thankfully for me, you know, growing up, my mom didn't let me stay in the house. My father wouldn't let me stay in the house. And in the heat of summer, I had to get outside. I had to go out there and play. I had to do those things that a lot of people don't want their kids to do now.

But it taught me something. It taught me that physical activity made me feel better about myself. It made me feel as if that I was—I was worth something.

I mean, I can go—I could do a lot of different things. But that is just not happening any more.

And when you talk—a lot of people think jocks are in better shape, but even in the NFL, they are having a real issue with trying to keep people in shape because they are having to teach them things that they just haven't learned.

The fundamentals of the game is going by the wayside because kids don't do the things that they used to do coming into the NFL.

So the inactivity of kids these days—and when you talk about the sedentary lifestyles that they lead—it is going to lead to what we are having now.

One of the things that I am involved with is with an organization called the National Council of Youth Sports is trying to get kids away from fundraising with candy because you see that being a direct correlation to childhood obesity. Because a lot of those kids are not selling the candy, they are eating the candy and they are taking the candy home and the parents are paying for it and the kids are eating it.

So we are trying to get that out of their hands because we know that that is a real issue.

Even in my own family, you know, I have nieces and nephews. My kids—I make my kids do certain things.

You know, I was very thankful when the Wii came out because at least now the kids can stand up and play games. They can move around.

You know, I have a 5-year-old son who plays the tennis game and, you know, you don't have to move, but he is running around the room, you know, trying to hit the ball. And I love that because he is moving around.

But I have other members of my family who are not as active. And we tried many things to try and get them motivated, including taking them to facilities where you see people who are not doing as well. And if you have to scare them straight, you have to scare them straight.

But we tried, and we will continue to do everything possible to keep—to get these kids—even in my own family—to keep them moving in the right direction.

So I am very happy to be here to just to lend my voice on the jock side of this, you know, because everybody thinks of jocks and they think, oh, well, the jocks don't have this problem.

But I am here to tell you, even with our young kids who are supposed to be athletic, there is an issue. There is a real issue that

I am very concerned about, and I am doing everything I possibly can to encourage these kids to keep moving.

You know, I have a motto in my house, "If you eat it, you got to move it."

And if you do that, I found that it will work for you. But to eat things and to have this sedentary lifestyle the way that a lot of kids do these days, it is a very difficult thing.

And it is—you know, you hear all the stats and you have my report in my statement in front of you with all of those things in it, but I just found that it is very discouraging for me, especially when I speak to the parents—

And I think we talk a lot about the kids and encouraging the kids, but I would encourage for some programs to be put together for the parents to understand the risks that their kids will have in they don't engage them in financial activity at a very young age.

And there are plenty of ways to make it fun. There are plenty of ways to make it competitive. But at the same time, the necessity of it is what, I think, everyone should know.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Brown follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Tim Brown, Former NFL All-Pro Player, National Chairman, Athletes and Entertainers for Kids**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. My name is Tim Brown and I am grateful to you and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify this morning about the health and fitness of America's youth.

During my football career and since, I have devoted much personal time to support youth development initiatives. I recognize I've been blessed with good health and a loving family, and I'm happy to have been able to give back in several ways. Our Mentoring Mini Camps take 100-150 fatherless boys each year and match them with role models while allowing them to have fun by playing football. Our Tim Brown Foundation runs a summer enrichment program which takes 175-200 kids for 10 weeks in the summer, all day, five days a week, and provides education, arts, sports and field trip opportunities for many who might otherwise be left with few healthy and fun choices in terms of how they spend their summertime. Since 1995 I've been the national chairman for Athletes and Entertainers for Kids/9-1-1 for Kids, which teaches kids how to handle emergency situations. Additionally, I work with the National Council of Youth Sports to increase funding and capacity for our nation's largest youth sports organizations.

I mention this brief background mostly to highlight some experience I bring to the discussion of children's well-being. In my view, our nation has to take immediate action to get our children to live more active and healthy lives. Providing quality daily physical education will go a long way to achieving this goal.

As a professional athlete, I have had the opportunity to speak to thousands of children. I'm saddened by how many children I meet every year who are struggling with being overweight or obese. At the same time, I'm struck by the dangerous number of kids who are not yet overweight but are headed down the road to ill health because they get so little physical activity and they have such unhealthy diets. Sedentary lifestyles mixed with bad food choices are too often the norm. The solution has to be focused on getting our kids to embrace regular exercise and good nutrition.

At the football camps in which I am involved, I see that kids just can't keep up like they used to. We have more kids every year who come to camp excited to play football, but who simply can't keep up with the basic drills once they get on the field. It's not just the seriously obese. In many cases, these are kids who look okay by appearance, but whose cardiovascular endurance is so low they can't even play enough to enjoy the game. It's dangerous and sad.

It seems every day we see statistics and studies that make the same point.

The percentage of obese children in America has tripled in past twenty years. The U.S. Surgeon General says obesity is the fastest growing cause of death and illness in America. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Levitt says obesity and the inherent diseases that result have to be considered among our most significant health threats in this country.

Some are estimating that for the first time in our nation's history, today's young people could be the first generation of Americans to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

I'm sure this Committee knows most of these statistics and their implications. This is a serious situation. I applaud the Committee for this hearing and I hope your work will result in a greater commitment in America's schools to physical education and nutrition awareness.

The good news is that there is a tremendous amount of progress being made. Around the country, innovations in Physical Education are making a big difference. The School district of West Babylon, New York, after receiving a Carol White PEP grant, reported they "systematically changed their PE programs and have already seen a 2% drop in the overall obesity rate of their student population." When Miami Dade County Public Schools implemented the "Shaping The Future" program to help high school students make better fitness and nutrition choices, they registered significant improvements in fitness levels for a) least fit students; b) overweight and active; c) already relatively fit and active; d) African American and Latino; and e) males and females. In other words, a good innovative physical education program can improve the health of every student.

And the benefits go beyond immediate health measures. Most of us appreciate intuitively the old adage linking "sound mind and sound body." A 2002 California Department of Education Study found higher academic achievement was highly correlated with higher levels of physical fitness, to the point that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction said, "We now have the proof we've been looking for. Students achieve best when they are physically fit."

It is not science or math versus physical education. It is science and math and physical education. Provided together, a child will learn better.

Good physical education has been shown to promote good behavior. Within one year of implementing daily PE through the PE4Life program, inner-city Woodland Elementary in Kansas City, Missouri experienced a 67 percent decrease in disciplinary incidents resulting in out-of-school suspensions. The same PE4Life model is being considered for Chicago schools.

More good news is that there is a growing realization that everyone has a responsibility to address childhood inactivity. PE4Life, YMCA, American Heart Association, and National College of Sports Medicine are just a sampling of organizations doing wonderful work supporting quality physical education. Closer to my world, the National Football League launched "Play 60" last year, a national youth health and fitness campaign encouraging young people to be active at least 60 minutes a day. Play 60 incorporates "What Moves U", a fitness promotion program of NFL Charities and the American Heart Association which has reached 25,000 middle schools.

Some of the best of today's physical education programs reach kids where they are. They use technology to inspire and motivate them. Using heart rate monitors in physical education allows kids to understand and take control of their own fitness in ways they never could before. Appropriate technology also can attract kids who normally would not see themselves as athletic or sports-oriented. Across the country, schools are getting big groups of kids dancing, smiling and sweating through Dance Dance Revolution and similar technologies. We're now seeing some video game companies creating games that force players to move around while they play. If it gets more people moving, I think it's not a bad thing. The best PE programs will figure a way to incorporate such innovations into their curriculums. These should be supported.

In closing, I recognize this committee has a full plate in overseeing all the challenges facing our country's education system. I urge you to recognize the overall value and priority of quality physical education and nutrition awareness in helping our children to live healthy, productive lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you. [Applause.]

Thank you all for your testimony and for your expertise.

Zach, you are more than welcome to join the members at the table.

Dr. Pate, in your testimony, you cite what many of us have heard on this committee; all the reasons why P.E. has been reduced or dropped from the school day. No Child Left Behind or teaching to the test or whatever it is they have done.

And it has been suggested that some kind of decision was made that P.E. was less important than the drill time on reading or the drill time on mathematics, that this was less important.

Given all the statistics that have been offered here, both by those of you on the panel and my colleagues on the committee and what we read on a daily basis, we are reading about a daily horror show with respect to the health status of young children in this nation and teenage children in this nation.

So it would seem to me that you have to recalibrate the priorities of the community and of the schools about the importance of physical activity in that school day. And you have the ability to combine that with academic achievement as the other evidence that you have presented suggested to this.

Ms. Benson, obviously, I love her mayor and chancellor because they just break a lot of china on their way to making change. But she has demonstrated that there are opportunities within the school day, after the school day, for this kind of activity.

But you spend a lot of time talking to people in this field. Do you get any sense that people are rethinking the model that they are using because, one, the students tell us that they are completely bored when they keep adding the drill and kill assignments.

And the teachers say in the next breath that what they are doing isn't working.

So how do we change the balance here in terms of health status of this generation?

Mr. PATE. Mr. Miller, I think that is an enormously important question, and I do believe this issue is starting to turn.

As Representative Wamp mentioned earlier, I don't think we have to make a choice between more activity for kids and continuing to pursue appropriate academic goals. I don't think it has to be one or the other. I don't believe they have to compete with one another.

I do think we have to pursue creative approaches to providing physical activity during the school day.

And, you know, as Lori mentioned and others have mentioned, I believe there are very important developments in this field that are demonstrating that we can add physical activity during the school day, some of that activity added in the classroom, which has traditionally been a quite sedentary environment and, frankly, have it both ways.

Have kids do well academically and also gain meaningful doses of physical activity.

Chairman MILLER. Ms. Benson, so how does that compare with what you are finding in terms of the acceptance and the understanding of the importance of the changes that you are applying?

Ms. BENSON. You know, what is so interesting is that as we are embracing this culture of fitness, classroom teachers are really beginning to understand that this is a good thing.

It is not an extra something I have to fold in, but it is something that we see a benefit in terms of increased energy levels, in terms of a better transition throughout the day.

And there is less and less resistance and more and more of how can I do this. You know, what are some of the interesting strategies? How can we help?

And I think it is important for us and everybody in the field to keep highlighting these best practices, to say yes you can do this. You know, and it doesn't have to be no-pain, no-gain. You can accomplish this with the least amount of resistance and the most appreciation for having this culture of physical activity within the school day.

Chairman MILLER. And one of the other things that seem to be changing in this discussion was early on, it was a suggestion that you were dropping P.E. or that class time and, therefore, you were dropping exercise.

And I think, again, Ms. Benson, in your testimony and in Tim Brown's testimony, this isn't just about a sport. This is about health status and moving.

And I noticed when you were naming the sports, Richard was frowning a little bit, and then you mentioned——

Mr. SIMMONS. I was not.

Chairman MILLER. You mentioned—yes, you were. [Laughter.]

Say you are a liar. So am I—back to you. [Laughter.]

They are never going to hang my picture in this committee. [Laughter.]

I had a thought here. You lit up when she mentioned dance and when Tim Brown mentioned keep it moving.

Mr. SIMMONS. [OFF MIKE]

Chairman MILLER. Let me finish for one second here. [Laughter.]

See this. Because what I find, also, is with a great deal of incredible encouragement by parents, kids pick up a sport. But when they get a chance to independently exercise their judgment, they very often say I don't want to play this any more.

But they then lose much of their activity because they are not encouraged with an alternative. So you are back to games or what have you.

Richard, I want to give you a moment here because I think it is important because if people think it is about whether they are going to be proficient at that sport, whether they are going to start, whether they are going to make the traveling team, whether they are going to make the select team, for a lot of kids, that is a serious confrontation with yourself.

But if it is about exercise that people can participate in and they can relate it to their own health status with some education, it seems to me that the number of young people that would be amenable to this and accepting it would be far greater.

Richard?

Mr. SIMMONS. Well, fitness cannot be competition. And there is a big problem there. You know, when you——

Fitness cannot be competition. When you are sitting in a—when you are standing in the school yard in the elementary school and there are two captains and they are picking the people, all the other people that don't get picked sit by the sidelines; there is nothing else for them to do.

But every child, as I said, needs what the adults in this room and in every room need; and that is cardio, strength training, and stretching flexibility like everyone else said.

You know, as a child, we teach our children through music, the alphabet, the numbers, and a lot of things about life. And then at a certain age, the music stops and everything becomes academic.

You cannot ask children to come to class before time and you cannot ask children to stay after time. You have to take it in the curriculum. You have to make this happen.

So my ideas are there are thousands of certified fitness instructors who have gone through training, who know the anatomy, who teach classes. They do it part time because they have another job.

But I want to assemble these instructors. You see, Chairperson George Miller, every school does not have a P.E. teacher. Sometimes, the P.E. teacher goes to five or six different schools.

And it can't be the job of a history teacher and the math teacher to teach them how to lift their legs and how to sweat. You need a certified instructor. I have talked to so many of these instructors; they are willing—is it state, is it federal, who is paying for this?

I believe that we can raise the money to have these fitness instructors come into the schools part time, teach the classes, non-competitive, and make every child feel good about themselves.

And as I said before, we are all servants for you. We will do anything. We have enough experience and enough sweat behind us that we could really put together a program that every child will feel good about.

You know, the No Child Left Behind Act was supposed to make our children well-rounded. Well, it made them rounded, and we have to change that. And we can only change that by doing fitness every day and being a good example with the food.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. Keller?

Mr. KELLER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank you all for being here.

I think sometimes our celebrities don't realize what a big impact they have on kids; much more so than a politician, even the president.

As I sat with Dr. Dot Richardson and she let the kids hold her gold medals, they just lit up like a Christmas tree. And I know that from my own kids.

My son, Nick, is not very impressed that his dad is a congressman and has no desire to go to the White House, but in his room, he has a photo of him with Dr. J. and a football signed by Tim Brown.

And those are the heroes. So thank you for what you do.

One of the things that shocks me as I look at you, Mr. Brown, I just met with another Heisman trophy winner not too long ago, Herschel Walker; you all look the same as when you were playing.

And it gets me to the issue of—

Mr. BROWN. I can assure you I am not the same.

Mr. KELLER. What is the difference between you—are you about the same weight now? Are you less or more?

Mr. BROWN. No. I put on about ten pounds.

Mr. KELLER. You put on about ten pounds.

Mr. BROWN. It is a good ten pounds, though, right?

Mr. KELLER. Herschel said two that he put on.

But essentially, you have maintained your physique over all these years. And when you look at the people who are successful in keeping the weight off in the National Weight Control Registry, the three things they had in common: They all ate breakfast, they all exercised an hour a day, and they all checked their weight once a week to see if they are deviating.

Even—let me ask you this: As an athlete, even at your level, do you still need to make an effort to have those healthy habits of exercising daily and eating right?

Or is it just naturally a gift that God gave you?

Mr. BROWN. Well, I have been very gifted by God, that is for sure.

But no, it is work. It is a situation—I was speaking about that this morning with Mr. Cole, I have to put an effort into it.

I try and do the same workout that I was doing when I was playing. I am hitting the numbers almost the same, you know. But it is an effort. It is not something that comes easily or is just natural. I have to definitely work at it on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. KELLER. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Simmons, very passionate speech.

You talked about the mental health aspects of exercise.

Let us take a hypothetical and see what—what advice you would give to parents. Let us say that you have a middle school child who is overweight and never eats breakfast all. And you want to sit down with him and mom and dad, but you don't want to hurt his self-esteem about pointing out the overweightness or whatever.

How would you motivate that child to eat the breakfast every morning and motivate the parent to make sure the kid does it?

Mr. SIMMONS. It is a—you know, it is everybody. It is not just the parent. It is not just the children. It is the family. We have more overweight and obese families in the United States than ever before.

I visit housebound people. I visit families where all the children are overweight.

But there is a chance, 40 to 60 percent chance, if a child is obese and overweight, one or two of the parents suffer from that, too.

So I think it really is an intervention. I think you have to sit down and in lay talk with the kids, really talking to him about nutrition, about the body, also educate the parents, let the parents and the children go grocery shopping together, let them start to be more physically active together.

You see, if we had the Fit Kids Bill, the kids would exercise every day and then they would go home to their parents and their parents would go, look at my kid. What are you doing?

And all of a sudden, the parents would start to feel that motivation because nothing is greater than to lose the weight like you did and to look in the mirror and say four words that maybe you didn't say before.

And those four words are: I am worth it.

So what I try to do is give worth to the children, give worth to the parents, make them feel good about themselves right now, you know. Not when they lose their weight but right now and give them hope and self-worth and self-esteem.

And that is going to come through a lot of hard work, plus I think some of the schools should offer the entire family courses. I think to bring the children and the parents in to talk about nutrition, to talk about the body, and let the family unit do this together.

Mr. KELLER. Well, thank you.

With my minute left, I want to direct the next question to both you and Congressman Wamp because you both hit on the subject about the best way to reduce stress in the world is sweat, about best mental health aspect.

I think I said in my opening that I have learned—

Mr. SIMMONS. When you are feeling lousy about yourself, you have no self-worth and you have no dignity in your life.

And when you are a test score and score at school—and it is all about testing—the kids are very stressed out. You can't imagine how many children under the age of 15 are taking antidepressants.

But the exercise—you know, the kids own the pop charts today. They own—they love music.

I take CDs, I make music up from all the current music. I have gone to hundreds of schools to teach.

And I can just see it lifted because it is not competitive. Their stress level, you know, disappears when they are feeling they have worth.

Mr. KELLER. Congressman Wamp, do you want to address the—

Mr. WAMP. I think that is the biggest secret that I didn't see coming. I didn't get into my exercise routine to reduce stress, I did it to feel better and look better and get healthier, and I was shocked that the biggest side effect is I am hardly stressed over anything.

Mr. SIMMONS. You are stressfull, and you are cute. [Laughter.]

Mr. WAMP. Well, thank you. I am stressful now, I will tell you that. [Laughter.]

Mr. KELLER. Congressman Wamp, my time is up.

Can you address that issue about the stress benefits?

Mr. WAMP. Oftentimes, when human beings are on the wrong road, they try to cross over to get on the right road instead of going back to where they started.

And going back to the fundamentals, it is fundamental as air and water and food and exercise and sleep. It is that fundamental. And without any of those in the proper balance, you got a problem.

And the holistic approach—if kids sleep well at night—which let me tell you, you sleep like a dead man if you exercise regularly. And that is good. I mean, close to death, not all the way.

Just, I mean, you get your heartbeat down, you sleep good, you wake up, and you are productive and you have a whole different outlook.

A lot of kids aren't sleeping well because they are not physically well. It is all tied into this holistic approach to quality of life and good health care.

I got to tell you, Mr. Chairman, it is going to save us the future of Medicare, the future of Medicaid, SCHIP. All of these government programs are unsustainable going forward unless we get this around on the front end.

That is why the fourth grade is the key moment in their life. If they understand by the fourth grade that there is a consequence to not having physical activity in your life, then we can get our arms around these health care things.

But the productivity, Ric, is just astronomical.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

I will attest to this. My grandchildren are very, very active and they sleep very well.

I just sent an e-mail out to my daughter-in-law asking if they were going to come in to see their grandfather today. And they said, no, they are still sleeping—

[Laughter.]

Mr. KELLER. They are on California time, is their excuse.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Kildee?

Mr. KILDEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It has been 43 years since I taught school, but in those days, I can recall, I used to help the counselors make up the schedule.

And we would—first hour might be English and then Latin, then P.E. as a regular class, history, and trig. And everyone was required to take P.E.

Is that a good pattern, or is there a better pattern that we should have? Dr. Pate, you want to expound on that?

Mr. PATE. I think there is—I believe there is enormous concern and should be that, as others have cited, activity levels decline with increasing age and grade level in children and to rather low levels by the time they are in middle and high school.

And the erosion in the provision of physical education over recent decades has been most clear at the high school level. So as kids are becoming less and less active, the schools are tending to provide less and less support for their activity.

I think that is a tremendous concern and I think, clearly, is part of the reason that we tend to see increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity as kids get into those age ranges.

Mr. KILDEE. Well, you know, I taught high school, Central High School. It is interesting that the kids who arrived from our Latin class—I was a Latin teacher—rather than being tired or weary from the P.E. class which may have taken place just before the Latin class, they were always very alert.

They know—very well. They knew their Latin well. They really—they seemed to be more invigorated.

That pattern isn't a common pattern now, is it, where you actually take P.E. as a regular class, regular class time?

How common is it now and, again, would it be a good pattern to return to?

Mr. PATE. Sadly, it has become quite uncommon at the high school level, at the middle school level. It is a very mixed picture across the country.

Generally, children in the middle schools are receiving physical education, but not necessarily at every grade level, not necessarily across the entire school year.

At the elementary level, children typically have physical education, but they often have physical education with a certified teacher rather infrequently. And a quite common pattern would be

one 30-minute class period with a certified physical education teacher per week.

The math just doesn't work. If we expect physical education to meaningfully provide physical activity to our children throughout their school years, it just simply cannot do it with the level of exposure that is currently provided.

Mr. KILDEE. Well, when I was teaching, they took Latin 5 days a week, trig 5 days a week, and P.E. 5 days a week, and it was considered—and everyone had to dress for it.

Some might have greater capabilities than others, some might have some problems, but they all had to dress for it and we fit it into the school day.

And there is talk, even for other reasons, perhaps, to extend the school day. But, perhaps, if we are extending it, we could at least fit in what we had as a regular pattern.

Everyone in Flint, Michigan—we had three high schools—and they all were—everyone had to take P.E. and dress for P.E. every day. And I think it was very helpful. But that pattern seems to be the exception now.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me, first of all, thank all the panelists here today, Ron and Zach and all of you.

I think you have hit on something which is extremely important, and you have articulated it very well.

Let me address a question for Mr. Simmons, and everyone else is welcome to chime in at some point.

I have listened attentively to all that has been stated here today, and a lot of it revolves around P.E. classes in school, organized classes outside, or whatever it may be.

And it occurs to me that all that is not going to happen right away. You just can't snap your fingers and get changes made in that way.

So my question is: Are there recommendations that you have in terms of what kids can do now, of what teachers and parents can urge their kids to do now with respect to their physical programs? I am thinking about things like walking to school, riding bikes, whatever it may be.

Believe it or not, this is about as sedentary job as you can get that we are in. We have been sitting here for 2 hours. So we actually have to walk when we go over to vote, and on some voting days, we get a lot of walk which can make a difference.

Are there other 15-minute type programs or anything that we can recommend that could be done now, assuming the kids are willing to do it?

Mr. SIMMONS. Well, I applaud all of the teachers who really don't have it in their curriculum to teach fitness, they will put a video on, they will get the kids up, they will get them moving.

You know, we can't overuse your children. We can't extend the day. We have to find, in the time that they are in school, this time to implement P.E.

Does 15 minutes do a lot? Well, it does a little bit, but it doesn't do a whole lot.

I think it is up to the PTA, to the Parents and Teachers Association, to look at their particular school, and if there is no funding, they can always do fundraisers. They can raise money in order to bring in teachers in order to teach cardio, strength training, and stretching.

But, no, this is not an easy fix. And 15 minutes is a Band-Aid until we can get all the schools, the public schools in the United States, to rejoice and be jubilant about getting our kids healthy.

You know, again, I said to bring the parents into the schools. Have something at night or on the weekends for them to go to to be educated.

But you know, you just can't—it is not an easy fix, and it is going to take all of you, Congress, Senate, the president, to pass the Fit Kids Bill so that we can put this into production and get our kids healthier.

Fifteen minutes will not lower their cholesterol. Fifteen minutes will not take away their stress or depression. Fifteen minutes will not make them fit. It is a beginning.

Many school teachers e-mail me and tell me they use my videos and DVDs and other ones in the classroom just to get them up every 2 hours to just get them moving.

But, again, that is a Band-Aid. Don't you think?

Ms. BENSON. I think that at a policy level, at a school district policy level, it is really about a commitment to systemic change.

Everything that I spoke about today did not exist 4 years ago within the New York City Department of Education. They were small pilots that became large steps that have effected hundreds of thousands of students.

So I think you need to look at all the different spokes in the wheel. You need to add those 15 minutes where you can because they will add up.

You need to create sustainable change at all levels, at the policy level, in the classroom, at the school level and beyond.

And again, engaging those families, because all those minutes, all of those changes in attitudes and behavior, that is what it is about. It is the changes, not just in terms of the minutes you do today, but the attitudes and behavior that will effect what students do as they grow up to become adults.

Mr. KEISER. If I could quickly add something, I just wanted to back up what they were saying.

As part of the governor's council, we had to go to public schools in Florida. Many of the concerns regarding P.E. in school was the physical responsibility of the school and whether they can get enough funding to add it into the curriculum or whether they could have enough time because of the FCAT because there was a new science requirement added just recently in Florida for the FCAT.

And I talked to teachers, and they said that they are making strides to add some physical education into it, not necessarily, you know, going outside and running, but what they would do is they would have a program where they would say how many steps will it take to get to Everest.

And they would have everyone go out on the track and they would take a meter and see how many steps it would take to get to Everest.

And once you get—reach Everest, then you get a prize or something like that.

Also, an alternative if we—like, if you don't have school time, I think starting at the family level and with the parent is essential because it is free to go outside and run down the street. It is free to go just running down the street, go to—run for a mile.

If you encourage kids to do that, they will—they will do it. And what they have to, in turn, do is make a lifestyle change.

I was active for many years, but I never lost weight. It wasn't until I made a lifestyle change where I decided that I wanted to lose weight and decided that I wanted to eat well that I lost the weight.

Mr. BROWN. Let me add to that, you know, if I understood your question, you were saying that the funding is not available and you can't, you know, make these overnight changes right away.

And that is why I mentioned in my little speech that it is very imperative that the parents make their kids do things or the parents get healthy themselves.

Because if you are healthy as a parent, then you are going to make sure that your kids are healthy. That is for sure.

I mean, I even find now that working on the treadmill is not like working out outdoors. I can run as hard—I can get up to 12 miles per hour on the treadmill, but it is nothing like going out on the track and running. It is just a difference.

So you have to get the kids outside some kind of way. And I think, again, if you can get the parents healthy and thinking about health and nutrition, then automatically, I think, they are going to make sure that the kids are healthy.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you all very much.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. Payne?

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

Let me just say—let me commend the chairman for having this very important hearing, and obesity is a serious situation.

Let me just ask Dr. Pate, you know, we could do a lot of things in the school and education and so forth, but in many communities, you know, you could—you could buy, you know, a weapon sometimes quicker than you could find fresh vegetables or food.

And what kind of suggestions do you have about how we can try to change communities that if a person wanted to have good fresh food, as a matter of fact, even years ago in some chains, national chains, they would send day-old or several-day-old bread or vegetables and fruits into their inner city chains and it was less fresh even from the start.

So do you have any suggestions on that issue?

Mr. PATE. Thank you for that question.

It is clear that attacking this problem is particularly difficult in neighborhoods that lack resources, and we do know that neighborhood safety is a factor that influences whether or not children are able to spend time outside.

I agree very much with Tim's point earlier that time spent outside is a critical factor in determining the physical activity levels of children, but I don't know of anybody that, you know, would sug-

gest that we place children in an unsafe environment in the interest of, you know, promoting their activity.

And so I think in—you know, in those settings, we will need other alternatives. I think we will need creative accessible, enjoyable after-school programs, weekend programs, summer break programs that children can—can transition to and be enjoyably physically active.

And, you know, as others have emphasized, the childhood obesity problem, as importantly as I believe it is, is influenced by physical inactivity. Clearly, dietary factors influence this.

And sadly, we do have neighborhoods in which access to affordable, healthy foods, fruits and vegetables, is, you know, is just a challenge that we need to address.

I certainly don't present that addressing this issue in neighborhoods that, you know, that are challenged in terms of resources is going to be easy, but we do know that the need is the greatest there. Those are the children that are most at risk of being inactive and developing overweight.

So I just think we have to redouble our efforts and be as creative as we can be.

Mr. PAYNE. All right.

Ms. Benson, thank you.

Is it mandatory in the New York City public school system to have physical education?

Ms. BENSON. Yes. It is mandatory. Our New York State standards require a minimum of 120 minutes a week of physical education at the—at all levels.

It should be daily physical education at the lowest elementary levels, no less than three times a week at the upper elementary levels, and at the secondary levels, it is three times a week in one semester and twice in the other.

Or actually, at our high school, it is 4 full years of physical education.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Keiser, thank you.

As a youngster, when you were overweight, did other kids tend to tease you or make you feel uncomfortable?

Mr. KEISER. I was actually not a victim of bullying.

But what actually got me was I was inconfident with myself. When we would go run around the track—I had P.E. in middle school two times a week. And when we would run around the track, I would be very nervous and I would not want to go out and run with the other kids because I would be the kid in the back.

And sometimes, you know, I would—you would see kids making fun of you, but they would never do it to my face which was fortunate for me.

But, yeah, I did—it wasn't that I was—it was outward bullying. I thought—in myself, that I was not confident in myself and I struggled with my own personal image.

Mr. PAYNE. Great.

Mr. Brown, just quickly, as a youngster growing up, I guess you were in pretty good physical shape, but was it your parents' influence? Sometimes they see potential in an athlete and they tell you to don't smoke, don't drink, don't stay out late.

As a matter of fact, just a little anecdote, it was probably before your time.

I coached—I taught Jim Tatum most of his—he was in elementary school when I was coaching in high school and noticed him as a fifth-, sixth-grader and I know he played for the Oakland Raiders a little before your time, I guess.

But was there an influence from your parents or your environment to tell you to stay healthy?

Mr. BROWN. Not to play sports. My mom never wanted me to play football. I mean, even after I won the Heisman Trophy, she was like, well, you could have done better in band. You know? [Laughter.]

So she was never—because she was afraid that I would get injured.

But she was very much a part of me getting out and being active, and that is all she wanted me to do was basically get out of her hair, probably, but she wanted me to get out the house and be active.

And so it was not a big push, and that is the one thing, you know, I know we are not here to talk about that, but I try to encourage parents, don't push your kids into being an athlete.

If they are going to be an athlete, they are going to be an athlete. But my mom and dad were not the kind of—my kid is going to be, you know, this or that. They just wanted me to be healthy and active and the same with all my sisters and my brother.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

Mr. SIMMONS. Chairperson George Miller, I want to remind everyone there is going to be a fitness rally at the Cannon Terrace right after we finish to let everyone know how important this is for our children, and, of course, I invite everyone here in the room.

Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. We will see if we can get through our questioning.

Mr. Hare?

Mr. HARE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just—a quick personal story.

Mr. Keller has lost a hundred and that is wonderful and he has been an inspiration to me. I have lost 42; that is—well, a year ago, I go to the doctor and he tells me, you know, your mother had diabetes, you are really overweight, you are got to do something about it.

I just kept eating.

I went back 6 months ago, and he said, well, now you are a Type 2 diabetic. Can we start talking about the exercises and weights?

So I have lost 42. Went back a week ago and things are looking much better. Hopefully, in another 6 months, I can get off these pills. But it shows you that it works.

One of the things I wanted to ask Richard and Tim: We have heard a lot about parents.

You know, I have an educational advisory committee. And a lot of the teachers tell me the kids that they see in school come to school with no breakfast.

Single-parent homes, mom is working, corn flakes are maybe in the cupboard, fix yourself something and then make sure you get ready for school.

The concern that I have is this whole—you know, this parental involvement is so incredibly important. What do we do—and then the other—the other caveat is in my state, some of the school districts are cutting back on P.E. because they didn't have the money to afford the NCLB things and so here you have a child whose mom or dad may be a single-parent home, they are not spending much time, and the child goes and they are cutting back on some of these classes.

So it is a double whammie for this young person.

So I am interested to get from you a perspective of what do we need to do to really bump this up? Particularly when there isn't make, you know, somebody like, you know, Tim, you were talking about your mom and how she wanted you to, you know, to, you know, to expel.

How do we do this? And thinking out of the box, maybe, for some of these young kids who don't have the opportunity to have that mentoring at home and sort of left that up to the schools to go ahead and feed these kids because these teachers tell me you can tell when these children have not have breakfast and how incredibly difficult it is to teach.

Mr. SIMMONS. You know, we are talking about two different things here. We are talking about food, nutrition. You know, there is a lot of single parents raising a child today. Mom and dad get up early to go to work to have money to put food on the table.

It all is about education. When a woman has a child, she does not take a course how to feed that child. When parents have a kid, they don't take a course on how to raise that kid properly and be a good example. I think education is the only way. I think we must educate the children.

I mean, when is the last time in the United States that a new health book was in our school system? You know, we are lacking in that area. It is not all about reading science and math.

I think there have to be programs at schools to educate the parents. There is no place else to go. There is no book to read.

And right now I am going to tell you something. Men and women are confused about how to lose weight. There are so many shots, there are so many pills, there are so many stupid diets, and I have been on them all.

I can only say, from sheer education and maybe the schools can offer programs for parents to learn more about how to be healthy, how to fix a healthy breakfast, how to make, you know, the budget last a little longer, and then the parents are going to have to learn how to exercise, too.

You know, you ask the average person if they exercise, and they are going to say no. And I think it is education. What do you think, doctor?

Chairman MILLER. I hate to do this because we are going to run up against your rally—

Mr. SIMMONS. My rally?

Chairman MILLER. And of secondary importance, votes on the floor of the House in the next few minutes.

So if you don't mind, I am going to give my colleagues who haven't had a chance one question so we can do that.

And so next would be Mrs. McCarthy and Mr. Sarbanes, Mrs. Davis, Ms. Shea-Porter, and Mr. Wu.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to go off the track a little bit because I agree with everything that has been said, you know, from my colleagues and certainly from the panel.

But it sparked my imagination when Mr. Brown talked about the Wii video game.

I have a handicapped son, adult, and we are always trying to find things that he would be able to do with his children and the Wii game was the answer. He has some movement in his right arm, but with that being said, we know 56 percent of children with disabilities don't get any kind of physical education.

So whether you have a physical disability or even learning disabilities, all studies show they all improve in their academic scores.

And just on the final one, Ms. Benson, why are we cutting down on physical education in middle and high school because that is when they need it the most to use that energy up so they don't get in trouble, in my opinion?

But, Mr. Simmons, I know that you have a program for—

Mr. SIMMONS. I work with physically challenged children, and I have since I have been on General Hospital when I was chairperson for spina bifida.

I have developed tapes and workouts called "Sit Tight." They are done to the kid's music, and they can—whatever a child can do.

I was at a hospital a couple months ago to teach a class, and there was a child that was brought in, and all he could move was his neck.

He was paralyzed from the neck down. But I have to tell you, when the music went on, I smile went on his face and he moved his neck just like everyone else moved their bodies.

So I am very, very, very focused on working with not only the physical physically challenged but the mentally challenged, the autistic.

All kids who come to my studio or come to see me in different cities, once the music goes on, they are just like any other kid and they move and they feel great about themselves.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Sarbanes?

Mr. SARBANES. I thank you, Mr. Chairman. Terrific panel.

Just calculating how many times you can say amen in a 5-minute period. But I will don't have to do that but I don't have 5 minutes.

It was mentioned earlier that I introduced this thing called the "No Child Left Inside" act.

And it was premised on research and statistics that show how much time kids are spending not on video games where it can be constructive for them, as Representative McCarthy indicated, but in instances where it is keeping them from being outside.

We are talking an average of 5 hours a day on video games, Internet, and television combined. In my house, we call it "screen time," and I try to limit the amount of screen time you get per day and push the kids outside the rest of the time.

So I was just curious if you could talk about, sort of, the other side, the other seductive forces that are pushing against getting kids outside and getting them engaged in exercise and what we can do about that.

Mr. SIMMONS. Well, I think that there are a lot of neighborhoods where kids cannot go out and play any more. I think there are just a lot of nuts running around and taking our children. And there are a lot of parents that are very afraid.

There is not enough parks around or recreational centers for them to go. And matter of fact, they shouldn't go without their parents at a certain age, and both their parents are working.

I really do believe it has to be in the curriculum of the school. I mean, I could go into any classroom, bring a boombox, put the music on. I guarantee you, within ten seconds, they are all moving and working out.

They can also do it outside if it is—you know, if it is covered. If it is, you know, like our football man said, you know, you get out there and it is just outside. [Laughter.]

Well, he is a football man. [Laughter.]

I mean, I am a sweat man; he is a football man.

And there isn't a lot of areas for these kids to go. That is why it has to be in the curriculum of the school.

Chairman MILLER. Mrs. Davis?

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is interesting and great.

Just a quick anecdotal. I remember when we did our resolution when I was in the state legislature acknowledging that, certainly, morbid obesity was a medical health crisis, a major crisis.

A got the most hate mail I have ever gotten in elective office for that. And so, you know, part of it, I think, is that we have moved in the last number of years so that people do understand and—it is not that people are trying to be mean to anybody; it is that we care about them and we care about their health.

And I think that is a very strong message that has to get out there.

I appreciate everything that has been said.

Thinking about what is it—what have we done in this country that—that has been a link, that has been something where people have really changed habits and behavior?

I think of smoking cessation as something that has alerted the public and has made them think about, okay, is this a good idea or a bad idea and what effect does it have on my kid.

The other thing is certainly in the environment where young people have taught their parents over the years. I think of encouraging every child to wear a pedometer so at the end of the day, they actually can see how many steps they have taken, which I think it great fun and when I go on walks, I want to know.

What, you know, are there some things along those lines that you think is a link? The data collection is very important.

I think you ought to put out—really give people information about that. If that is the best longitudinal study that is being done that really affects where you are tracking kids achievement and how it relates to fitness, that is incredibly important.

So I don't know, just a few ideas throwing out there.

And I appreciate the work that you are all doing.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Ms. Shea-Porter?

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you.

I was known, according to my son, as the mother who had the most boring refrigerator in the school and that nobody wanted to come to my house because the snacks were boring.

But I am here to tell you they came to my house anyway and my children are 19, 22, and fit and lean. And I thank all of you for working with other kids.

And, certainly, I used to see you and, and thank you very much, Mr. Simmons, for trumpeting this cause.

However, we haven't talked about it, as far as I know, how some of the schools work against the children by punishing children who have not finished their work or are talking sitting in their seats, or in some way appearing to be disruptive, and the first thing they do is take away recess.

And so I wanted to ask what can we do about that? Because ultimately, no matter what we say here and no matter what we do, if teachers and principals still that technique—because we know that children that are disruptive actually need to move around, make, more than the others and have—

Mr. SIMMONS. I would say when they are—when they do not behave, let them do 20 more minutes of exercise.

I don't think P.E. or recess should be taken away to punish a child. Children are children. There is ways of making sure that they behave themselves better by just talking with them and trying to find out what is in their mind.

But you cannot take away recess. Do you know how many parents write me whose children have ADD and other problems, and they are in the classroom all long and they don't even get a recess.

This is very wrong. There is other ways to reprimand a child besides punishing them with no recess and P.E.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I agree. But how do we get that out so that every school in every district knows that cannot be a policy—the teacher individually, and I understand teachers can be driven to the end of their rope. But I remember reading what a doctor said to a mom who had a very active child and she wanted a prescription and the doctor wrote, “The park four times a day.”

So how do we get that across so that in individual schools we don't see that policy still enforced?

Ms. BENSON. You know, we talk about education for our students, but this is also about policy education for administrators.

And it is a new world. And it is really important that we provide the support for our school leaders so that they understand the benefit of physical activity, not just because it is a core—it is a core area that is a right for students—but also the benefits for overall student learning and the environment.

So one of the things we need to do is have that policy. Many districts now have district wellness policies, and that is a very clear position statement.

But physical education and removal of physical education and activity should not be viewed as a source of punishment. And that is the way that we are absolutely moving with—

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Keiser, did you want to comment on that?

Mr. KEISER. No, I am fine. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Well, thank you.

Thank you all, to my colleagues and to the panel for your participation today. And to Zach and to Ron Kind for bringing this hearing to the committee.

Just a couple of closing notes. I don't want this to become a contest between video games and physical activity because we are also discovering some very, very exciting things that video games contribute to the learning and educational experience of young children.

So I don't want to get this into a different war.

And I think we have to recognize that this generation is digital. And so those CDs, their music, the Internet, you get them up and get them moving.

And most of the school system is still analog, and it is a clash that is in the classroom, and I am afraid it may also be on the playground in terms of how you can get young students moving.

So we want to open up those avenues.

And I will also just raise a point here that I think too often, now, parents put their children into sports and they want the next Mia Hamm, they want the next Tim Brown, they want the next Dr. J.—I am showing generational problems here. [Laughter.]

But you also may be saying to the kids if you can't achieve that goal, then you are out. And, you know, we see it. We talked about communities that are poor in resources.

As Harry Edwards, a sports psychologist tells us, you see kids in poor neighborhoods are maybe the most disciplined kid you have ever met, and what are they trying to do? They are trying to learn a reverse dunk. And they spend hours and hours and hours commanding that skill.

Then the colleges back up, they take those kids out of the community or the sports teams take those kids out of the community and that is it.

And I think if that is the reward, I have a better chance of being a brain surgeon than making the NBA. I mean, I am still waiting to be picked on the congressional basketball team. I have been here 34 years. But they are going to get to me. It is going to happen.

So I think we also think about this reward as I think Richard has said—and you are not going to get to comment on it—but, this is about them. This is about them. This is about their life, about their opportunities.

And as Dr. Pate has pointed out, all the medical indicators are now running against them.

And so this is about them. And it is not about whether they are going to be an MVP or make the NFL or any of that.

And I think we have to translate how we talk to children about this because the current system, I am afraid, just tells a lot of kids don't even bother to apply because you are not going to be able to leave in your high school senior year for the NBA.

I admire those guys that do, but that cannot be the sum total of the message. We are going to work on the message. We are going to work on the legislation.

Thank you all for your support.

And, Richard, you got to go lead a rally.

Thank you very, very much to all of you. All members will have 14 days to submit extraneous material or questions for the hearing record.

[The statement of Mr. Altmire follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Jason Altmire, a Representative in Congress  
From the State of Pennsylvania**

Thank you, Chairman Miller, for holding this important hearing on the benefits of physical and health education for our nation's children.

Research recently released by the National Institutes of Health showed that the level of physical activity among children in the U.S. is dramatically decreasing as they move into their teenage years. Other studies reveal that more than one third of U.S. schoolchildren are obese, which illustrates how important it is to expand and improve physical education in our nation's schools.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from today's witnesses and their suggestions for how Congress can help to combat childhood obesity and improve the well-being, and in turn success, of our nation's schoolchildren.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I yield back the balance of my time.

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[The statement of Mr. Kucinich follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Dennis J. Kucinich, a Representative in  
Congress From the State of Ohio**

I would like to thank Chairman Miller for his continued commitment to comprehensive education and ensuring that all children have access to the resources that will help them become healthy and productive adults. I would also like to thank my friends Congressman Ron Kind and Congressman Zach Wamp for their persistence in encouraging healthier lifestyles and choices for our nation's youth.

The problem of childhood obesity is well-documented, and we are all familiar with the statistics: 32 percent of the nation's children are overweight, 16 percent are obese, and the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that the figure will exceed 20 percent by 2010. "Adult onset" diabetes has become a misnomer: incidence of type II has doubled in youth. As computers, cell phones, video game systems, and other types of technology become more prevalent in America's homes, children are redefining "recreation" away from physical activity and toward sedentary activities.

Responses to this epidemic abound, and they need to be supported and enhanced. Youth need more regular physical activity, parents must make healthier decisions regarding family diet, exposure to technology must be monitored and regulated, and nutrition education must be a component of elementary and middle school curricula.

At the same time, however, I believe if we are to combat this problem effectively we must also understand and address the causes of the problem. One of the causes that particularly distresses me, and one that receives relatively little attention, is the aggressive and predatory marketing of food and beverages to children and adolescents.

In 2006 the Institute of Medicine reported that it is estimated that more than \$10 billion annually is spent marketing food and beverages to youth; the vast majority of that money is spent marketing items with marginal or no nutritive value. Do they get a bang for the buck? Food and beverage sales to children and youth exceed \$27 billion annually. They wouldn't do it if it didn't work.

While television remains the most popular medium for marketing, food and beverage companies have been industrious, to say the least, in creating new means to market their products and create branding opportunities. Product placement in movies, video games, music videos, and even news broadcasts ensure exposure to brands and products despite best efforts to avoid commercials and print advertisements. Banner and pop-up advertisements on the internet intrude on children's surfing routinely, despite the best software protections. Sponsorship at school sporting events, advertisements in school newspapers and in prepackaged media, and snacks in vending machines ensure that children are exposed to products and brands throughout the school day. We are fast approaching the day, if we aren't there already, when children find respite from food and beverage marketing only as they close their eyes to sleep.

This is not harmless advertising. Food and beverage marketing uses the best research available about brain development to ensure that their products are exposed to minds not yet fully developed. Again the Institute of Medicine reports that research tells us that humans develop consumption motives and values at an early age. In other words, developing brand allegiances early in life is profitable. The report also tells us that children have widely varied abilities to separate factual information from persuasive content and those abilities develop at different ages. In other words, it is easy to convince children that a product is healthy.

I firmly believe that if we are to help our children cultivate healthier lifestyle habits and make better nutrition choices, we must protect them from marketing practices whose primary function is to encourage increased consumption of unhealthy products. Any policy response to the youth obesity epidemic must include concrete ways to regulate the exposure of children and adolescents to food and beverage marketing.

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[The statement of Mrs. McMorris Rodgers follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, a Representative in Congress From the State of Washington**

Thank you Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon. I thank our witnesses for being here today to discuss the benefits of physical education for children.

Access to quality and affordable health care is one of my top priorities in Congress. Health care continues to be one of the fastest rising costs to employers and employees. To fight these rising costs it is crucial we take more control over our health. Proper exercise, nutrition and lifestyle changes can often prevent personal health problems. We must encourage the American people to make a new commitment to adoption a healthy lifestyle by making healthy choices.

Healthy living for children begins in the home. As parents and mentors, if we choose healthy and active lifestyles, the impact we can have on our children is far greater than a class in school. In addition to learning active lifestyles at home, extracurricular physical activities can have a positive impact on a young person's health.

There is a dramatic increase of American youth who are becoming markedly overweight. The new found relationship between hypertension, diabetes and obesity is a significant health concern. It's an even bigger concern for minority populations of Hispanics and African Americans. More and more children are exercising less, and eating increasing amounts of widely available, inexpensive foods high in fat, sugar and salt. American children and adolescents are now at greater risk for hypertension, insulin resistant type II diabetes and high cholesterol due to these weight problems.

I believe a positive solution to this current health care crisis is to support legislation that strengthens both physical education and extracurricular activities. However, Congress must be careful about adding federal mandates to local educational priorities. I support the idea of providing incentives schools to implement rigorous physical education programs and improving outcomes of this curriculum. Clearly, a priority must be placed on identifying those children most at risk.

As a nation, we need to hold ourselves, our dollars and our programs responsible for our health care. We must begin to refocus our health sector on encouraging wellness and prevention, not simply paying for acute care after people become ill. We must challenge Americans to be healthy and our health care system should recognize and replicate programs that emphasize patient wellness and prevention efforts. The federal government, states and health insurers should build new incentives into health plans to encourage wellness and prevention and should provide incentives for people to make smart choices involving their health, health care and coverage. Health problems caught early are far less expensive to care for and the treatment is far more effective. A quarter of all health care costs can be prevented through our own lifestyle choices. We are a nation that is eating more, exercising less and this is making us more stressed than ever. It is time for us all to take control of the wheel and start steering our lives in a healthier direction that empowers individual with greater control of their lives and health.

I look forward to hearing the thoughts and perspectives of our witnesses regarding physical education programs and how we can better promote healthy lifestyle choices for our nation's children.

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[The statement of Dr. Levi, submitted by Mr. Miller, follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Jeffrey Levi, Ph.D., Executive Director, Trust for America's Health**

Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a national non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority, is pleased to provide the Committee with our views on the benefits of physical education and physical activity for our nation's children.

Overall, approximately 23 million children are obese or overweight.<sup>1</sup> One of the factors contributing to our nation's childhood obesity epidemic is that we have created a physical environment that reinforces a less active lifestyle, and we have not compensated for this in the level of physical activity we promote in the schools.

Thirty years ago, nearly half of American children walked or biked to school; today, less than one in five either walk or bike to school.<sup>2</sup> For children, the placement of schools and access to safe venues for physical activity are particularly important. One study found that the primary reason that children do not walk or bike to school is because their school is too far away. Other concerns included too much traffic, no safe route, fear of abduction, crime in the neighborhood, and lack of convenience.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a Government Accountability Office study found that "areas of low socioeconomic status and high minority populations had fewer venues for physical activity" and "adolescents in unsafe neighborhoods engage in less physical activity" than their peers.

Even during school hours, many schools are not maximizing opportunities to promote physical activity and physical education. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's latest School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), only 3.8 percent of elementary schools, 7.9 percent of middle schools and 2.1 percent of high schools provided daily physical education or its equivalent.<sup>4</sup> It is encouraging that the SHPPS noted that the percentage of states that required or encouraged districts or schools to follow standards or guidelines based on the National Standards for Physical Education increased from 59.2% in 2000 to 76% in 2006. It is very important that physical education classes focus on increasing physical activity levels and changing life patterns. In fact, physical activity should be promoted whenever possible before, during and after school. Yet, even where opportunities for physical activity may be available—such as school playgrounds—many communities are encountering liability concerns as an impediment to after-hours use of these community resources. That is unfortunate as there is growing evidence that fitter more active students perform better academically. For example, a research brief by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation noted that "fourteen published studies analyzing data from approximately 58,000 students between 1967 and 2006 have investigated the link between overall participation in physical activity and academic performance. Eleven of those studies found that regular participation in physical activity is associated with improved academic performance." The brief also noted that three other studies conducted between 1970 and 2006 with students from one or two schools reported a positive correlation between physical activity and academic performance.<sup>5</sup>

To truly tackle the obesity epidemic, we must make healthy choices easy choices for all Americans, regardless of where they live or what school they attend. We need a cultural shift, one in which healthy environments and physical activity become the norm. Last week, Trust for America's Health released a new report, *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*, which examines how much the country could save by strategically investing in community-based disease prevention programs. The report concludes that an investment of \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five

<sup>1</sup>Ogden, C.L., M.D. Carroll, and K.M. Flegal. "High Body Mass Index for Age among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 2003-2006." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 299, no. 20 (2008): 2401-2405.

<sup>2</sup>McDonald, N. C. "Active Transportation to School: Trends among U.S. Schoolchildren, 1969-2001." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 32, no. 6 (2007): 509-516.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Barriers to Children Walking and Biking to School—United States, 1999." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 51, no. 32 (2002): 701-704.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "SHPPS 2006: Physical Education." <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shpps/2006/factsheets/pdf/FS-PhysicalEducation-SHPPS2006.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "Active Education: Physical Education Physical Activity and Academic Performance." (Fall 2007).

years. This is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1. The economic findings are based on a model developed by researchers at the Urban Institute and a review of evidence-based studies conducted by the New York Academy of Medicine. The researchers found that many effective prevention programs cost less than \$10 per person, and that these programs have delivered results in lowering rates of diseases that are related to physical activity, nutrition, and smoking. A copy of the report is attached for inclusion in the hearing record.

Community and school-based approaches aimed at reducing obesity are currently being implemented and should be supported and expanded. For example, the Carol M. White Physical Education Program provides competitive grants to schools and community-based organizations to implement and expand quality Physical Education programs for students in kindergarten through grade 12. Grantees use funds for a variety of purposes, such as purchasing new equipment, ranging from heart rate monitors to treadmills, training staff, administrators and teachers, and funding community-based programs. Furthermore, hundreds of schools in at least 10 states are using the video game Dance Dance Revolution as a regular part of their physical education curriculum. The game requires students to dance in sync to music and offers them an innovative way to increase physical activity. In addition, some communities have begun “walking school buses” with the help of parent volunteers; other schools have started walking clubs. Another successful program is the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH) elementary school program, which provides education for students, modifications for improvements in school lunches and physical education, and increased education for staff and teachers. Results have shown that students in the program consumed healthier diets and engaged in more physical activity.

One final example is the town of Somerville, Massachusetts, which developed a comprehensive program called “Shape Up Somerville” to curtail childhood obesity rates. The project included partners across the community. Various restaurants started serving low-fat milk and smaller portion sizes; the school district nearly doubled the amount of fresh fruit at lunch and started using whole grain breads; the town expanded a local bike path and repainted crosswalks; and the town targeted crossing guards to areas where children are most likely to walk to school. Researchers evaluated the program after one year and found that children in Somerville gained less weight than children in surrounding communities. (Growing children are expected to gain some weight.)

The efforts that schools and communities have taken to increase activity levels should be applauded. Yet, to truly make a difference and help our kids to lead healthier lifestyles, we must change societal norms. That will require a long-term, coordinated commitment that extends beyond what happens during the school day. Our children need venues in their communities in which they can be active. At this time, we have no national, coordinated effort to combat obesity and promote active communities. TFAH supports the development of a National Strategy to Combat Obesity. This needs to be a comprehensive, realistic plan that involves every department and agency of the federal government, state and local governments, businesses, communities, schools, families, and individuals. It must outline clear roles and responsibilities. Our leaders should challenge the entire nation to share in the responsibility and do their part to help improve our nation’s health. All levels of government should develop and implement policies to make healthy choices easy choices—by giving Americans the tools they need to make it easier to engage in the recommended levels of physical activity and choose healthy foods, ranging from improving food served and increasing opportunities for physical activity in schools to securing more safe, affordable recreation places for all Americans.

Schools and communities can and should play a large role in helping to reverse the obesity epidemic and enabling children to lead healthier lives. If we want our children to lead healthy, productive lives, we need a strong partnership from the government, private and nonprofit sectors, as well as parents and teachers, to emphasize wellness and enhance nutrition and physical activity. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this issue.

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[Questions submitted to witnesses and their responses follow:]

U.S. CONGRESS,  
Washington, DC, July 31, 2008.

Lori Rose Benson, *Director,*  
*Office of Fitness and Health Education, New York, NY.*

DEAR MS. BENSON: Thank you for testifying at the July 24, 2008 hearing of the Committee on Education and Labor on "The Benefits of Physical and Health Education for Our Nation's Children."

Representative Jason Altmire (D-PA), member of the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee, and member of the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness Subcommittee has asked that you respond in writing to the following questions:

1) According to recent studies, more than 150 million American's over the age of 20 are either overweight or obese. It is also estimated that by 2010, 20 percent of children will be obese. One way to combat obesity and rising health care costs is to promote physical activity. Currently, fifty two percent of adults do not meet minimum physical activity recommendations. Many Americans do not know what kinds of exercises they should be doing as well as how much they should be doing. Do you think it is appropriate for the federal government (HHS) to develop and promote physical activity guidelines that would give Americans the necessary information they need to make positive decisions and maintain proper health?

2) In combating the obesity crisis, Americans need to monitor their nutritional intake and improve their physical activity. Currently, the federal government releases nutritional guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research. Why don't they release physical activity guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research?

Please send an electronic version of your written response to the questions to the Committee staff by close of business on Tuesday, August 5, 2008—the date on which the hearing record will close. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

GEORGE MILLER,  
*Chairman.*

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#### Responses From Ms. Benson to Questions From Mr. Altmire

*1. According to recent studies, more than 150 million American's [sic] over the age of 20 are either overweight or obese. It is also estimated that by 2010, 20 percent of children will be obese. One way to combat obesity and rising health care costs is to promote physical activity. Currently fifty two percent of adults do not meet minimum physical activity recommendations. Many Americans do not know what kinds of exercises they should be doing as well as how much they should be doing. Do you think it is appropriate for the federal government (HHS) to develop and promote physical activity guidelines that would give Americans the necessary information they need to make positive decisions and maintain proper weight?*

In my work in New York City's almost 1,500 public schools, we use a wide range of materials to provide students, teachers, and parents with the information they need. The question of how to educate, motivate, and support Americans of all ages requires a wide range of tools and strategies.

In New York City, only 53 percent of public school students are at a healthy weight. As educators our job is to raise the level of student knowledge and expand opportunities for young people to increase their minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity during the school day. We use strategies that go beyond the traditional "gym" class. As students get up and moving we are teaching them the immediate and long-term health benefits of daily physical activity. In the past school year we sent home 640,000 NYC FITNESSGRAM reports in nine home languages offering individual information that supports students in learning about and measuring components of health-related fitness: aerobic fitness, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition.

I am looking forward to the Health and Human Services "Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans" report to be issued in late 2008. The report will provide science-based recommendations on the latest knowledge about activity and health, with depth and flexibility to target specific population subgroups, such as seniors, children, and persons with disabilities. The best thinking of the wide range of experts assembling the report will certainly add critical information to the anti-obesity campaign. <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2007pres/04/pr20070427a.html>

2. *In combating the obesity crisis, Americans need to monitor their nutritional intake and improve their physical activity. Currently, the federal government releases nutritional guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research. Why don't they release physical activity guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research?*

This is an interesting question because it touches on one of the most challenging aspects of the obesity epidemic. What information and which combination of communications strategies will generate the largest behavior modification in the shortest period of time? Put most simplistically, maintaining a healthy weight is a balance between calories in and calories out. However, issues of maintaining a healthy life style are complicated and offer no one-size-fits-all solution. Two national reports issued in the past couple weeks address different aspects of this public health issue.

The Federal Trade Commission's July 2008 report examined "the marketing of food and beverages to children and adolescents. The report found that 44 major food and beverage marketers spent approximately \$1.6 billion to promote their products to children and adolescents in 2006. The report also tracked the food and media industries' progress in response to the FTC's recommendations in its May 2006 report, and documented steps taken to encourage better nutrition and fitness among the nation's children. The report included recommendations for both food and beverage industry members and entertainment and media companies to expand and strengthen their initiatives on food marketing to children." <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/menus/resources/guidance/foodmarketing.shtm>

The August 4th, 2008 report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest investigated "the nutritional quality of kids' meals at 13 top restaurant chains. Ninety-three percent of 1,474 possible choices at the 13 chains exceed 430 calories—an amount that is one-third of what the Institute of Medicine recommends that children aged four through eight should consume in a day." The report notes that eating out now accounts for a third of children's daily caloric intake, twice the amount consumed away from home 30 years ago. <http://www.cspinet.org/new/200808041.html>

These reports address the "calories in" part of the equation. On the "calories out" side, sedentary lifestyles have become the norm in our country. While it is true that federal nutritional guidelines are the best known for their recommendations on nutritional components, I suggest taking a look at Chapter 4 Physical Activity of the Dietary Guidelines for America 2005 [http://www.health.gov/dietary\\_guidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter4.htm](http://www.health.gov/dietary_guidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter4.htm). There are specific recommendations for daily minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity broken out for different demographic groups.

Another invaluable resource in my work with New York City's 1.1 million public school students is the CDC "Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People." A look at the summary of recommendations provides a road map for American governmental agencies, NGOs, communities and families. "The guidelines include recommendations about 10 aspects of school and community programs to promote lifelong physical activity among young people: policies that promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity; physical and social environments that encourage and enable physical activity; physical education curricula and instruction; health education curricula and instruction; extra-curricular physical activity programs that meet the needs and interests of students; involvement of parents and guardians in physical activity instruction and programs for young people; personnel training; health services for children and adolescents; developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs that are attractive to young people; and regular evaluation of physical activity instruction, programs, and facilities." <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/guidelines/summary.htm>

As we increase our commitment to research, it is critical that we also focus on communications strategies. The most frequent analogy used with obesity is our country's commitment to anti-smoking initiatives. In the decades since the first Surgeon General's report, we have made significant progress in changing people's level of knowledge and their behaviors. If we are going to generate the same impact for obesity, every sector of American society must decide that we can no longer accept the personal and social consequences of being overweight.

U.S. CONGRESS,  
Washington, DC, July 31, 2008.

Dr. Russell Pate, *Associate Vice President for Health Sciences,  
Professor, Department of Exercise Science, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina.*

DEAR DR. PATE: Thank you for testifying at the July 24, 2008 hearing of the Committee on Education and Labor on "The Benefits of Physical and Health Education for Our Nation's Children."

Representative Jason Altmire (D-PA), member of the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee, and member of the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness Subcommittee has asked that you respond in writing to the following questions:

1) According to recent studies, more than 150 million American's over the age of 20 are either overweight or obese. It is also estimated that by 2010, 20 percent of children will be obese. One way to combat obesity and rising health care costs is to promote physical activity. Currently, fifty two percent of adults do not meet minimum physical activity recommendations. Many Americans do not know what kinds of exercises they should be doing as well as how much they should be doing. Do you think it is appropriate for the federal government (HHS) to develop and promote physical activity guidelines that would give Americans the necessary information they need to make positive decisions and maintain proper health?

2) In combating the obesity crisis, Americans need to monitor their nutritional intake and improve their physical activity. Currently, the federal government releases nutritional guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research. Why don't they release physical activity guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research?

Please send an electronic version of your written response to the questions to the Committee staff by close of business on Tuesday, August 5, 2008—the date on which the hearing record will close. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

GEORGE MILLER,  
*Chairman.*

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#### Responses From Dr. Pate to Questions From Mr. Altmire

DEAR CHAIRMAN MILLER: I was honored to have the opportunity to testify on July 24, 2008 before the Committee on Education and Labor regarding "The Benefits of Physical and Health Education for Our Nation's Children." This letter is to respond to Representative Altmire's questions as communicated to me in your letter of July 31, 2008.

Representative Altmire posed two questions, both pertaining the need for federal guidelines on physical activity. Following are the two questions and my responses to them.

1. *According to recent studies, more than 150 million American's over the age of 20 are either overweight or obese. It is also estimated that by 2010, 20 percent of children will be obese. One way to combat obesity and rising health care costs is to promote physical activity. Currently, fifty two percent of adult do not meet minimum physical activity recommendations. Many Americans do not know what kind of exercises they should be doing as well as how much they should be doing. Do you think it is appropriate for the federal government (HHS) to develop and promote physical activity guidelines that would give Americans the necessary information they need to make positive decisions and maintain proper health?*

I believe that it is critically important that the federal government provide to the American people clear, scientifically sound recommendations regarding participation in physical activity for promotion of health and prevention of disease. In my view, provision of such guidelines is an integral step in the process of effectively promoting increased physical activity in the U.S. population. I believe that increasing physical activity is one of the great public health challenges currently confronted by our nation. Accordingly, I am very pleased that legislation has been proposed that would call on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to issue scientifically sound physical activity guidelines. This proposed legislation, The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Act (H.R. 5639/S. 2748) has been introduced by Senators Harkin and Brownback and by Representatives Udall and Wamp. I am hopeful that this very important legislation will be passed and implemented as soon as possible.

*2. In combating the obesity crisis, Americans need to monitor their nutritional intake and improve their physical activity. Currently, the federal government releases nutritional guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research. Why don't they release physical activity guidelines every five years based on the latest scientific research?*

The proposed legislation mentioned above (H.R. 5639/S. 2748) would require that federal physical activity guidelines be issued on a five year revision cycle. This is the current practice for the U.S. Dietary Guidelines which have been produced on a five year revision cycle for over 20 years. In recent versions of the Dietary Guidelines some attention has been given to the role of physical activity in prevention of obesity. However, we know that physical activity provides a wide range of health benefits, and in my view, it is unacceptable that we continue to overlook most of those benefits when federal guidelines are issued. The Dietary Guidelines play an important role in establishing federal policy for nutrition. I believe that it is essential that we give comparable attention to physical activity.

I was honored to serve on the U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee in 2004-05, and I am equally honored to be currently serving on the U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, a group that was empanelled by Secretary Leavitt. Later this year the Department of Health and Human Services will release the first federal guidelines on physical activity. Unfortunately, we currently lack legislation that would require the Department to continue issuance of scientifically sound physical activity guidelines on a regular basis. The proposed legislation mentioned above would mandate that this happen in the future. I am very hopeful that this important legislation will be passed and implemented.

Again, I was honored to provide testimony before your Committee, and I would be pleased to help in the future in any way that I might.

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[Additional material submitted by Mr. Simmons follows:]

**Printed Handout Submitted by Richard Simmons, ASK AMERICA**

I was the fat kid. You know, the kid sent to get the snacks rather than play in the game. The kid always picked last. I was that kid that tried every angle and had every doctor's excuse to get out of gym class.

PE was embarrassing, almost like a punishment to me. I didn't feel good enough about myself to even try. Of course, there were also the kids who just loved sports and were good at them. You know, the stars of PE class, the jocks.

Now personally, I have nothing against jocks. They are nice people too, but they are definitely outnumbered. Think about it: every weekend, hundreds of thousands of people file in to stadiums all across America to sit, eat and observe while only a small handful of people on the field actually play! Hmmm \* \* \*

Fortunately for me, I did finally discover the miraculous benefits of good food and proper exercise as an adult, and have a wonderful career teaching what I have learned to love. Everyday, I speak with hundreds of people about their own and their families' struggles with weight, health and motivation.

An alarming trend has come to my attention. Do you know that according to the Institute of Medicine report, 'Progress in Preventing Childhood Obesity: How do we measure up?,' currently one third, a whopping 33%, of America's children are obese or at risk for becoming obese? Health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, and even heart disease, once thought of only as adult disorders, are showing up in our kids! Many teens are opting for gastric bypass surgery.

According to a May 2006 report by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the American Heart Association, only 8% of all the Elementary Schools and only 5.8% of all the High Schools in the United States offer daily physical education. ONLY 5.8%!

Because of the NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND LAW, many schools have dropped their PE programs and have eliminated recess for younger kids in order to 'raise test scores.' This, in spite of the fact that many educators believe that physical activity helps promote learning and improve academic performance. My Team and I have gathered a collection of studies in support of this positive relationship, a relationship that is now in jeopardy.

I don't want an entire generation growing up like me, hating to be active, and unaware of the incredible benefits of good nutrition and physical fitness. According to 'Shape of the Nation Report 2006,' "a child who is overweight by age 8 is 80% more likely to become overweight or obese"!

PHYSICAL EDUCATION MUST return to a standard part of our education curriculum. For many kids, because of economic or environmental concerns, school may

very well be the only place they are able to participate in any sort of physical activity.

We must take PE and change it to a 'Positive Experience' for every child!

I prepared the simple questionnaire titled 'Richard Simmons' ASK AMERICA,' and took my campaign to the airwaves. I was honored to appear on 'The Today Show,' 'Late Night with David Letterman,' 'The Howard Stern Show,' 'The Neil Cavuto Show,' 'The Ellen Show,' 'The Glenn Beck Show,' and many others. I'm very happy and proud to report that, in the end, we received over 60,000 completed surveys.

My Team and I were amazed by the overwhelming response to our survey. The genuine concern and frank candidness with which each essay question was answered was incredible!

The American people spoke, and their message was clear: 94% of all ASK AMERICA respondents want PE to be a required subject at all levels of education, elementary through high school.

In February of 2007, it was my great honor to venture to Washington D.C. to meet my now good friends and collaborators, Representatives Zach Wamp and Ron Kind. We discussed crafting a bill that would return quality Physical Education to every public school student in the nation. Ultimately, HR 3257, the FIT KIDS ACT, was brought before the House Education and Labor Committee, led by Chairman George Miller.

With sincere interest from the Leaders, unprecedented support from the public and the media alike, I pledge to continue my efforts and see this project through to a happy and successful ending \* \* \* no matter how long it takes. Our kids, our future, deserve nothing less.

I am aware that our nation's teachers are overworked and underpaid. I have a vision: members of the community joining forces with these fine educators; certified fitness professionals working directly under the supervision of certified Physical Education teachers at schools that may not be able to afford additional staff or equipment.

Our children deserve our best.

RICHARD SIMMONS,  
July 2008.

#### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Obese Kids have annual health care costs \$172 over healthy weight kids. *University of Missouri KC*

By age 15, less than 33% of teens are as active as they should be. *University of San Diego*

VIGOROUS Physical Activity improves mathematics scores and Executive Function skills. *Dr. Catherine Davis, Medical College of Georgia*

Without an investment in Diabetes prevention now, there will most likely be an increase in young adults with TYPE 2 Diabetes. *University of Michigan*

The number of U.S. adults who are obese increased almost 2 percent between 2005 and 2007. *HealthDay July 17, 2008*

*"Our program is one class per week, the person is paid next to nothing. The funding has been cut back. We need Richard's help."*

*"The key is getting school boards, government (on all levels) to recognize PE is NECESSARY and IMPORTANT. It is an investment that will pay off over a lifetime."*

*"The kids have to choose between eating lunch or playing outside."*

*"If you are not healthy, then what good is it going to do you to be smart? If you die at an early age because of overweight, then what good are good grades?"*

*"I supervise student teachers in elementary school and witness the punishment of recess being rescinded, and PE practically non-existent."*

*"However, now due to NCLB, the children do not even get a break to let out energy."*

*"As a teacher educator, I am concerned that the public schools have taken away PE from the elementary schools. Often, the students get PE once a week for only the first half of the year."*

*"Richard, the best thing the government can do is make the money follow the child. An equal amount of exercise dollars should be spent on each child in the school just like it is for books and for special needs children. I teach psychology. There is no question that a healthy body includes a healthy brain."*

*"Our students enjoy PE immensely. They love the teacher who is very innovative. They look forward to it, and wish it could be more than once a week."*

*"My son has always struggled in school, and he has ADHD. We changed schools and when he was allowed to be physical, he did wonderful and lost 60 pounds. His doctor couldn't believe it."*

*"NCLB has taken out many valuable programs in our school systems for the sake of better test scores. The makers of NCLB failed to look at how these programs bring out the better side of students and that these programs are essential to promote the different learning styles of every student."*

*"Our district gives us 36 cents per student to spend on (PE) equipment \* \* \* if we're lucky! Our conditions are not very good and our district is a Title I district. I am glad you are helping us Richard."*

*"My son has chosen to run instead of EATING at lunchtime. He has lost a great deal of weight because of the school's curriculum."*

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[Whereupon, at 12:11 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

